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SCRUTINY

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THE SPENS REPORT

A SYMPOSIUM-REVIEW[1]

> 'This closeness of connection between the character of a society and the character of its education cannot be too strongly stressed. Schools and colleges are not something apart from the social order to which they belong. They are that order trying to prepare its youth for participation in its own activities. And a society can only teach the hopes, the knowledge, the values, the beliefs which it has.'
>
> Alexander Meiklejohn, *The Experimental College*.

IF these depressing considerations leave some of us (including Dr. Meiklejohn) still arduously interested in education, it must be because it is still possible to believe that the obvious drift—or drive—of civilization doesn't exhaustively represent the 'hopes, the knowledge, the values, the beliefs' of the society to which we belong. And in fact it is in that society conventionally assumed that education should be in some ways concerned with countering certain characteristic tendencies of civilization. Those of us who are not completely pessimistic are committed to believing that this assumption is in some measure justified by a correspondent reality, one which we ought to do our utmost to make more effective.

In bold moments a complementary proposition to Dr. Meiklejohn's may perhaps be thrown out: namely, that schools and colleges are, or should be, society trying to preserve and develop a continuity of consciousness and a directing sense of value—a sense of value informed by a traditional wisdom. Any serious

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[1] *Report of the Consultative Committee on Secondary Education* (H.M. Stationery Office, 3/6).
Eight contributors, the editors' indebtedness to whom is not to be measured by amount of quotation or particular reference, sent in commentaries on the Report.

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notion of education would seem to involve both propositions. Their reconciliation in practice, things being as they are to-day, cannot be provided for by any simple formula. A complete and happy reconciliation would clearly involve more than educational reform. The problem facing the critic of an official report on a national system of education is correspondingly difficult. There will be the question of the criterion, and no simple answer to it.

Most of the critics whose opinions are reported in what follows write as educationists engaged in practice within the system, and, whatever radical questions or doubts they may glance at, set their main criterion by the kind of improvement that might, from such a point of view, reasonably be hoped for.

> ' The general trend of the report is praiseworthy. No teacher genuinely interested in education would be likely to quarrel with its aim, though, naturally, there may be differences of opinion on details of method.
>
> One's chief criticism would be on the grounds of vagueness.'

This correspondent is borne out in the expectation expressed in the second sentence quoted: the actual teachers among the symposiasts take on the whole a similar line. They repeat too the charge of vagueness. This, for instance, is representative:

> ' The first important chapter is Chapter IV, on the curriculum. This chapter (like most of the Report, in fact) is difficult to judge partly because of the vagueness of much of it and partly because of the general Fabian tone. The survey of the " principles of the curriculum " rarely engages with the concrete: one is irritated by the inanimate loftiness of the expression. One's comment is " Yes, but what do you mean, exactly?" '

Nevertheless there is agreement, though the expression is not always so emphatic, to the following effect (to quote a third correspondent):

> ' The general pronouncements of the Report are of great value in that they give support to aims and methods long recognized by intelligent opinion, but still too often ineffective against professional conservatism.'

What in particular meets with the approval of all the teachers is the insistence on English:

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'The importance of English, in all its aspects, as "capable of giving a meaning and unity to the whole course."'

Most of them, however, qualify their approval more or less severely, *e.g.*:

'But it is in the section on "literary appreciation" that the committee's vacuity about "English" is most blatant. This is full of the vague inanities beloved of conventional anthology introductions: "learning to enjoy as well as understand," "seeing beauty as well as comprehending meaning," "to enjoy literary power and meaning," "to distinguish gold from tinsel," "we may not be convinced of the danger of 'tasting the Pierian spring,' but certainly it is our aim that all English men and women should of their own will 'drink deep of it'" . . . moreover there are very few recommendations about method . . .'

In this kind of criticism this critic has fairly general support; as also in the following:

'But I'm disconcerted right at the start by the odd order of the "English" subjects. A "reasonably wide reading" of English comes fourth, separated from a "training in clear and precise expression of ideas" by History and Geography. How this training and how training in real comprehension (mentioned perfunctorily in this section) can be given without Literature, one can't quite see. I should welcome more details about the "other exercises" mentioned in the sentence: "we have still much to learn from the methods of teaching composition employed in French Schools and we should welcome these and other exercises designed to develop powers of comprehension and expression." This will be an incentive to the educational publisher but not much else.'

This last note is struck again by another critic:

'If the Committee had been obliged (it wasn't) to accept the present S.C., one would then have been grateful for some of their suggestions; *e.g.*, in English they disapprove of set books and advocate a simple test in the use and understanding of the English language as a necessary qualification for obtaining a School Certificate. But the Committee must be very innocent

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if it cannot visualize School Certificate forms spending a year or more doing nothing but tests in the use and understanding of English from the dead little manuals which the " educational " publishers are already selling.'

And here we come to the point most strongly urged in qualification of the approval given to the general aim of the Report in matters of curriculum: only one of the teachers who wrote at any length didn't explicitly censure the attitude taken by the Committee towards the external examination system. The correspondent just quoted writes:

> ' The Report quotes severe criticism of the School Certificate: it determines the curriculum, narrowing and stereotyping it (p. 80—also p. 142). " Drastic reform " (p. xxvi) is therefore necessary. Their proposals for reform are on p. 260 ff. . . .
>
> So far as the S.C. is concerned their recommendations are mere tinkering with the machinery—which is perhaps inherently stultifying and incapable of reform. Here was an opportunity for one or more of the 500 or so witnesses to say " abolish the thing." But if any of them did, it must have shocked the Committee, because no such suggestion appears. It is deplorable that the Committee, having got so far as to accept some radical criticisms of S.C., should (in its timidity?) lose such a chance of real reform . . . There is no case for retaining S.C.'

Another correspondent writes:

> ' If the external exam. remains, whatever it is called and however " liberal " a syllabus it permits, it will always be the first aim of most schools to get as many children through it as possible and that will always mean standardization, mass-production, rigidity, uniformity and the rest. The Committee make no attempt to diagnose the real reason for the retention of the exam.: the profits made by the examining bodies.'

A good many other particular points were made by the half-dozen critics (for that was the number) writing as teachers, but, interesting as further quotation would be, space is lacking. Their general attitude has been sufficiently indicated—though scrupulousness dictates the final remark that one of them was a good deal less

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severe in qualifying an approval of the general aims of the Report than suggested above.

The two correspondents who remain to be considered demand more space individually. Neither is a school-teacher, though both are qualified by immediately relevant professional experience. Their criticism of the Report is radically adverse, but from something like opposite points of view, as will be seen. One wrote a considered critique which will be printed last ; the other, though busy and hurried, was kind enough to supply these notes:

' I have only time to make one point—to suggest it, I should say, since I shan't have the time to bring up all the evidence.

' This point is that the Report is in intention, and probably will be in effect, thoroughly reactionary (I am not suggesting that the members of the Consultative Committee are anything but " progressive " and " liberal ").

'After the last election the Government issued its educational programme ; in that programme the two chief points were the development of technical education and of physical training. That is, the Government was concerned then as now with procuring national efficiency ; *i.e.*, with producing a nation fit to go to war. (And this means, of course, a nation that won't use its intelligence, physique, technical efficiency, to oppose the policies and systems of the groups in power.

'Academic secondary education—whatever its weaknesses—was dangerous. It needed to be restricted more closely to the members of the groups in power. (During the last slump-crisis, in 1931 I think, Dean Inge said: " In the past the public-school man has been exposed only to the natural competition of his own class. But now our sons have to meet the artificial competition deliberately created by the Government, who are educating the children of the working man at our expense in order that they may take the bread out of our children's mouths "—from the *Manchester Guardian*. Nor is the danger confined to this " competition." The Oxford motion on King and Country shows another aspect of it. (As does the part played by students in China, for example).

'And so the Spens Report recommends a restriction of Grammar School places—see Conclusion 152, and pp. 319-322. The figure they suggest is *lower* than the average for the years

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1936 and 1937. At the same time they recommend the diversion of the demand for higher education into Technical channels.

'The historical sections, by the way, are probably tendentious, and make an interesting comparison with the corresponding sections of the Hadow Report. History in 1939 looks quite different from History in 1926.

'Of course the Report is full of progressive ideas. But these stand very little chance of bearing fruit—*e.g.*, Recommendations 132 (parity of Schools), 135 (teaching establishment), 150 (leaving age 16). Under the cover of these aspirations the drive to make education vocational will go on (*i.e.*, to make higher education for the masses suitable to their station in life).

'One other thing I need say. That is that "on educational grounds" I believe that education for all children between the ages of 11 and 16 should be practical and vocational, rather than academic, liberal and humane. The best age for liberal and humane education is 16 to 22 or older (*i.e.*, Sixth Form and University). "On educational grounds" I agree with most of what the Report says. Were it made in a different social and political context I should not call it reactionary.

'Furthermore I believe that its liberal and progressive professions should be used by all progressive people; that attempts should stubbornly be made to secure the fulfilment of these professions. I think that the Report can be used in two ways—that it is a two-edged sword. But I'm sure which edge is being sharpened in Whitehall.'

The other radically adverse critic writes:

'The Spens Report, it would appear, passes judgment upon itself not only by quoting the following passage with approval, but by taking it as basis for its own recommendations. The passage comes from a Royal Commission which reported in 1895:

> "Secondary Education . . . is the education of the boy or girl not simply as a human being who needs to be instructed in the mere rudiments of knowledge, but it is a process of intellectual training and personal discipline conducted with special regard to the profession or trade to be followed . . . All secondary schools . . . in so far as they qualify men for doing something

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in life, partake more or less in the character of institutes that educate craftsmen. Every profession, even that of winning scholarships, is a craft, and all crafts are arts. But if Secondary Education be so conceived, it is evident that under it technical instruction is to be comprehended. The two are not indeed identical, but they differ as genus and species, or as general term and particular name, not as genus and genus or as opposed terms. No definition of technical instruction is possible that does not bring it under the head of Secondary Education, nor can Secondary Education be so defined as absolutely to exclude from it the idea of technical instruction. Under the common head there are many species . . . Technical instruction is secondary . . And secondary instruction is technical, *i.e.*, it teaches the boy so to apply the principles he is learning, and so to learn the principles by applying them, or so to use the instruments he is being made to know, as to perform or to produce something, interpret a literature or a science, make a picture or a book, practise a plastic or a manual art, convince a jury or persuade a senate, translate or annotate an author, dye wool, weave cloth, design or construct a machine, navigate a ship or command an army. Secondary education, therefore, as inclusive of technical, may be described as education conducted in view of the special life that has to be lived with the express purpose of forming a person fit to live it."

'A certain looseness of language is to be noted, suggesting a similar looseness of thought. The term " secondary education," for example, would appear to be used as the name now of a genus, now of a species ; and the adjective " technical " as the name now for what differentiates a species from all else under the genus, now for what all the species have in common. " Secondary instruction . . . is technical ; technical . . . is secondary " ; it would be extremely difficult to decide from all this whether, in the Commission's mind, the genus inclusive of both secondary and technical is itself the one or the other. Strictly speaking of course it is neither ; but there might be less impropriety in transferring to it the one rather than the other name. Probably the Commission was content to think of it—or to have a vague " feeling " of it ; the word " think " is complimentary—as both ; now one, now the other, as the argument demanded. But it is impossible,

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if one wishes to be honest in housekeeping, to tell oneself in this way that a cake is both eaten and stored.

'Behind this fumbling there lies the intention to assert that secondary and technical education have something in common. And so they have: nothing however of great importance, if the Commission's arguments are to be judged by. "In so far as they qualify men for doing something in life" there are, it would seem, a vast number of things in the character of which secondary schools might be said to partake: not only of institutes, but of families and churches, of surgeries when teeth ache and of boot-shops when feet are bare. In the accommodating language of the Commission, at least, they might be said to do so "more or less." And as the immediate function of a boot-shop, as far as the customer is concerned, is to facilitate walking—that is, to enable something to be done: it would seem obvious that there is *more* in common between a bootshop and many or perhaps all institutes, than between any institute and the ideal secondary school which, if at the present time nowhere to be found, is easy to be imagined. The immediate function of the latter is to qualify men, not to do anything, but to know and to feel rightly; and so—but only mediately—to do.

'Before being impressed by resemblances discovered between two existents, it is necessary to be convinced of the knowledge and tact—or wisdom or prudence; it is difficult to find, in modern English, a word for the proper combination of right thinking and feeling—of the persons who make the discovery. Otherwise a deal of valuable time may be wasted over moons and green cheeses. Unfortunately it is rather lack of knowledge and taste than the opposite which would seem to have characterized the Commission of 1895; at least, so far as is apparent from the quotations made by the Spens Committee. That they should seize on the winning of scholarships as a representative secondary school activity should perhaps be passed over, for it is a joke; jokes are however not uninformative. And towards the close of the above passage comes a list of human activities, in which in all seriousness the "making of a picture or a book" (the Commission does not, even in this context, recoil from the verb "make") is ranked alongside the making of textiles or of machines. The implication is clear—or if not, is so from the whole tenor of the Spens Report,

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to which doubters must be referred—that the mutual responsibilities and dependences between engineer and society are at least comparable to those between society and author or artist.

'It may have been possible to hold this belief in 1895; or at any rate to act upon it, without outward circumstances bringing it closely to the question. An obsequious Providence, or the natural evolutionary forces (biologic, economic or—for the higher-minded—merely metaphysic) may have seemed a sufficient guarantee for future, as they had proved of present prosperity. Without any conspicuous aid from at any rate contemporary intellect and conscience, society had been brought to such perfection that it was necessary, not to enquire what jobs were worth doing, but merely to do the many which were to hand. If contemporary conditions required engineers or scholarship winners, then both engineering and scholarship winning were laudable; at least equally, and possible more so than enquiring why society should require certain things to be done at all; or seeking in prose or verse to express the effects of doing them upon the human soul. In 1939, however, most people have shared in or witnessed one great war, and four major revolutions which are far from merely political; a yet greater revolution is at any rate conceivable, and a second war upon us. Society's demands are no longer clear; and what would seem to be so is that in the past blind acquiescence in such demands was at least conducive to evil. Yet the Spens Committee assumes that it was not: and, as was said as the beginning, that without consciousness of inadequacy it can confess the optimistic faith of 1895 is its sufficient condemnation.

'It would seem a conclusion of unprejudiced common sense that, if man wishes his affairs to prosper, he must himself assume some responsibility for them: must decide that, of the innumerable and varied things he might do, some alone are worth doing, some most worth doing—and try to do the latter. A period of general preparation, of contemplation, that is, is necessary before even preparing for any particular activity; and it is essential to the well-being of any society, that contemplation should be encouraged and provided for. Tradition of centuries has done this, at least in part—even so not adequately; but that is a subordinate question—by what was called a *liberal education*. While he was being *liberally educated*, a man was held back from doing this particular

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thing or that ; and taught if he were receptive the advantage, if stupid the necessity, of exercising forethought and fore-feeling before committing himself.

' The notion of a *liberal education* is as a red rag to both Spens Committee and Commission of 1895 ; hence their desire to assimilate secondary schools where, however feebly, its inspiration has been preserved, to technical schools where from the first that inspiration has been scouted. They wish to put everybody in the street straightaway, and to set them walking. If opposed both to common sense and to tradition, as has been suggested, this wish is unnatural ; all the more important therefore that it should be recognized and if possible understood, as a contemporary phenomenon to be combated.

' The Commission of 1895 seems to have had extremely unfortunate examples of liberal education before it. Schools which taught classics, it said, *might* be as little liberal as those which gave instruction in a practical art ; modern literature *might* be made " a field for as narrow and technical a drill as the most formal science." Of course they *might*, and of course they *have*: complaints of this kind have nowhere been made with more frequency than in *Scrutiny*—*Scrutiny* however has not, with the Commission, assumed that they *must* be so. And in that it has the support both of logic and of tradition. As for the Spens Committee, on this point, had it known or wished, it might have referred not only to tradition, but to recent and even contemporary practice. But *nous sommes des orfèvres*: and there is a second ground on which to criticize without offending modesty.

' The Commission writes, and presumably the Committee agrees, that " education inevitably becomes more and more practical, a means of forming men, not simply to enjoy life, but to accomplish something in the life they enjoy." The education described as " forming men . . . simply to enjoy life " is, it should be explained, the liberal. But if so, then even if it were successful, obviously it would not be desirable ; it would indeed be the most undesirable education of all. And a sufficient answer would seem to be that it cannot be so: that human nature and the human situation forbid that, when a man is not being " practical," he should inevitably be " enjoying himself." Rather, as has been seen, it is desirable that, before being practical, he should engage on

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strenuous intellectual and emotional activity. The Committee and Commission might as well suggest that, if a man is not walking down the street, he is inevitably day-dreaming ; whereas it is at least possible, he should ponder, from time to time, where he is going to go.

' It is melancholy to reflect that, in thus endorsing the opinions of 1895, the Committee is faithfully reflecting and thereby strongly encouraging, the vulgar superstitions of to-day. The vast majority of our contemporaries are compelled to lead a life in which there is a hard and fast division, as the Americans put it, between work and whoopee ; the more articulate among them seek to persuade others, no doubt, also to persuade themselves, that this division is right, proper and founded in nature. They give up hope of rescuing out of a barren isolation the two halves of life which, if they could be brought together, might be immeasurably fruitful. And thus there is established as ideal an existence which consists of clerking on weekdays, golfing on Sundays ; visits to the city during the week, during the week-end to Brighton. Obviously the Committee has been so captivated by this ideal as (following the Commission) to project it into the past: they assume that, when the eighteenth century, the Renaissance or even the mediæval scholar read his classics, he was undertaking nothing more than a trip to Brighton—an intellectual Brighton, of course, well cleaned and well policed, but still a Brighton. The eighteenth-century scholar might smile at this description of himself, and admit its partial justice ; the scholar of the Renaissance on the other hand would have ready his oaths, the scholar of the Middle Ages his prayers.

' Behind all this there would seem to be a nineteenth-century distrust or rather scorn of the intellect. Prosperity rots the intellectual fibres ; not having need to think, the nineteenth century and its successors neglected and finally refused to do so. As has been said, they rely upon natural forces, imagined as having brought them to their present state, to preserve and with a gradual inevitableness to improve it. If everyday experience, or the experience of ages shown in history, suggests that it may be unwise to do so, then experience and history are wrong. The nineteenth was the most unhistorical of centuries: willingly it referred only to Hellas as its ancestor—but its Hellas was a fiction, and it

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neglected entirely the Middle Ages. So does the Spens Committee, with the addition of renouncing Hellas. That it renounces tradition has been mentioned more than once.

Its most remarkable incursions into history are those by which it seeks, not only to foist its idea of liberal education on the past, but to cite the past as witness to its ideas. The only education worthy the name says the Committee, is practical, vocational ; but the Middle Ages believed in this because schools and universities were only for priests, lawyers, or doctors. As is well known, priests have a vocation. Similar in a later century academies were established to train boys and youths to be gentlemen: to be a gentleman however is a vocation. But this is mere punning, and would be beneath notice in a document from another source.

'Once again it is melancholy to notice the Committee submitted to and conspiring with the dangerous prejudices of to-day. People are only too ready to believe that all occupations are of equal dignity: a poet with a pastry cook, a scholar, unless he makes more money, with a stockbroker, and as obviously he makes less, people are only too anxious to be stockbrokers or cooks. The Committee goes near to offering them the opportunity of being so, while at the same time persuading themselves that *ipso facto* they are educated.

'Distrust of the intellect might be illustrated time and time again: as for example from a section which, as it is of subordinate importance to this notice, has not yet been touched upon. Among its detailed recommendations upon teaching the Committee writes: "The history of Greece and Rome and the conceptions which they gave to the world retain immense importance for the understanding of the modern world." The conceptions of the intellect, it would seem, are given a very deep bow. However, the Committee goes on: ". . . but, save as these conceptions have been interpreted in the thought of later times or are embodied in existing institutions, they are less widely relevant than, for example, recent history . . ." and now it becomes apparent that the bow is no more than a ceremonious one. For if it really believed in the immense importance of certain conceptions, the Committee would also believe that it was of an importance equally immense for a pupil to disengage them as soon as possible. And he would do so if they were presented in an unfamiliar setting: the very multitude of contrasts between

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ancient Rome, for example, and modern London drawing attention to the essentials which they have in common. But if on the other hand the Committee doubts whether intellectual conceptions are of great use in history ; whether it is as true to say that political or social ideals are striven for or abandoned, as that one age mechanically or naturally develops into the next: then of course it will, as here, seek to concentrate attention on what lies nearest to itself. It will have the hope—a feeble one, but it will have no other—that having divined how to-day developed out of yesterday, it will be able to prophesy how to-morrow is to develop out of to-day. And this is in fact the explanation of what the Committee recommends.

'Again in a footnote on "the course of philosophy in the highest classes of French *lycées*," the Committee remarks that "one may regret the great English classics, such as the philosophical writings of Locke, Berkeley and Hume, should be commended to the attention of French schoolboys, and yet be scarcely known in English schools." Nevertheless, it continues, "we must agree that the English schoolmaster has shown a sound comprehension of his pupils' needs in not introducing them to studies that demand maturity for their due appreciation." Either the English pupils' needs differ widely from those of the French, or the French schoolmaster is being accused of over-haste. Yet it would be dangerous to condemn him as a failure. In fact the Committee, like many contemporaries, cherish the notion that as Englishmen are by nature unintellectual, they may be excused the labour of being so. Would Englishmen of the eighteenth or a preceding century have pleaded thus? The maturity of the French *lycéen* compared with an English schoolboy has often been noticed, and attributed to a host of causes: climate, physique and what not. It would be interesting to speculate how much of it is due to the philosophy course now under discussion, and to all that it stands for. The atmosphere of a *lycée* is more mature than that of a secondary school: there the professor implies and the pupil acknowledges what is rarely acknowledged or understood in England—that it is not only possible but desirable for the intellect to play a part in the conduct of life.

'The first criticism in this notice was of the Committee for neglecting, or for approving the neglect, of elementary rules of

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logic ; a similar criticism may prepare its close, now that a kindred topic has emerged. On the subject of academic freedom the Committee hopes that England, unlike other countries, will not seek to " regiment " either schools or pupils. For, they say, they " find it impossible to believe that a community . . . has not everything to gain from the free growth of individuality among its potential citizens." Now if *individuality* means anything it means the substance of an individual—of the man A, the man B, the man C, and so on. And according to substance there is no growth: except in a figurative sense, the man A can never hope to be more of A than he is at this moment, nor the man B more of B . . . any more than a cow, by existing a vast number of years or by any other means, will ever augment its cow-ness. The man A can hope to grow, not into more of A, but only into more of a father or more of a teacher, the man B into more of a son or more of a citizen . . . can hope to grow, that is, only according to his qualities. And once this is realized, it is also realized that to talk of " free growth " as necessarily beneficial is absurd: for qualities are general and not particular to any man, and if a man would grow into them it is to them he must conform. They will not conform to him. It is impossible to be a good citizen, a good teacher, a good son, even a good father without being regimented, that is to say without conforming, in some degree. Yet it is impossible to be a civilized individual without being one or more of these ; and what therefore the Committee hope for—or otherwise they should not be at all concerned for schools, and should recommend the opening of gaols and of asylums—can only be that regimentation should not be irksome as elsewhere. To define its degrees and kinds would be an exhausting task, which the Committee cannot be blamed for refusing ; it should not however seek to hide refusal behind offensive *clichés*—meaningless at best, and at worst misleading.

' Because of its reluctance to engage on intellectual distinctions the Committee was from the first doomed to failure in its difficult discussion of *liberal education*. For without doubt the discussion is far more difficult now than in any former age: in which, as has been hinted, a liberal education was only one of the opportunities provided for self-preparation and for contemplation. It affected no more than a small number of persons, those who,

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among other things, might as statesmen, lawyers or priests, conceivably be called upon to guide society through unforeseen contingencies. The majority, or at least a significant number of the rest, for whom society was stable, were taught to prepare themselves and to contemplate first in the family and home, and secondly in the fields or workshop. All these were respected institutions, within which it was possible to lead a satisfactory life. The quality of living open to farmers or craftsmen, rooted in their small town, village or countryside, has often been written upon in *Scrutiny*. Workshop, farm and often home were however destroyed in the industrial revolution, to be replaced by the factory and the elementary school.

'The tradition of a liberal education was thus deprived of what might be called a tradition of liberal training, which had been its main supposition and support. In the resulting isolation it was exposed at best to misunderstanding, at worst to envy ; of late it has been exposed also to infection. For the elementary has spilled over in to the secondary school ; divergent aims have in consequence been pursued within the latter, have thwarted one another, and there has been waste of money and effort. It is true that, in the present situation, there is very little to be approved; in refusing vigorously to do so, the Spens Committee renders a great service.

'Its remedies however will be worse than the disease. For the technical school or institute it hopes to multiply will, no more than the elementary school, satisfactorily replace the workshop and the home ; and further, in order to multiply this useless thing it is willing to sacrifice what is still conceivably of value—the remains of a liberal tradition in our schools.'

It remains to thank the contributors for their collaboration.

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THE AMERICAN CULTURAL SCENE

(III) EDUCATION

THE people of the United States have always regarded public education as one of the most important responsibilities of society. Harvard was founded in 1636, six years after the colonization of Massachusetts ; and by 1776 there were already in existence, in different parts of the country, seven other colleges of university rank. A public school system providing for universal free education was from the beginning the programme of New England and of the western states which were colonized after the Revolution, and had become a reality everywhere except in the South before the Civil War. The accepted ideal (to quote from the constitution of the State of Iowa, as drafted in 1846) was ' a general system of education, ascending in regular gradation from township high schools to a State University, where tuition shall be gratis and equally open to all.'

At the present day (in spite of considerable differences between the educational facilities of wealthy states such as New York and California and those of the poverty-stricken South) the physical manifestations of this faith in education are numerous and impressive. There are twenty-two million seven hundred thousand pupils in elementary schools, and six million four hundred thousand in high schools ; of children between the ages of five and seventeen, eighty-four per cent. are attending school. There are eight hundred and seventy thousand school teachers ; and the money spent on education by public bodies averages nearly seventy-five dollars a year for each pupil. There are nearly one thousand colleges and universities, of which eighty-two have enrolments of more than two thousand five hundred, and the faculties of which total nearly on hundred thousand. The total number of undergraduates is more than one million two hundred thousand ; the money spent each year on higher education is nearly five hundred million dollars ; and the

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total value of the endowments and properties of colleges and universities approaches four thousand million dollars. By comparison with the equivalent statistics for any other country in the world, such figures seem almost astronomical.

That the American educational system can be considered as successful would not, however, be maintained by any disinterested observer. It has, by contrast with that of Great Britain, the inestimable advantage of being democratic ; the overwhelming majority of the population pass through the same public school system, and private schools (corresponding to the public schools of Great Britain) are relatively few and lacking in prestige. But there is no doubt that there has been a considerable levelling-down as well as a levelling-up, that the enormous quantitative development has been accompanied by a considerable sacrifice of quality, and that the standards of the average American secondary school and university are lower than those of their European equivalents. To some extent this situation is the result of factors which are peculiar to the United States—to immigration, for example, which has meant that for a considerable percentage of the population English has been a foreign language. But to a large degree the problems of American education are problems which are inherent in a democracy and which, though more acute in America than elsewhere, have a general significance. They are the problems of maintaining high cultural standards in a society which is dominated by egalitarian ideals, and of preserving respect for a liberal education when it is no longer a badge of class supremacy and has no obvious economic utility. An educational system cannot be healthy and vigorous unless it is visibly performing a necessary social function. The only functions which are generally expected of the American system are to inculcate respect for American traditions and to provide specialized training for the professions. The best American professional schools, particularly those of law and medicine, are at least as good as any which can be found in Europe. But in so far as American schools and colleges attempt to provide a genuinely liberal education, they encounter considerable difficulties.

During the colonial period the American colleges had the social function of providing the Protestant churches with a learned ministry and—in the South—of imparting the culture appropriate

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to a land-owning aristocracy. The curriculum, as in Europe, consisted mainly of Latin and Greek—a study which, in spite of its narrowness, did at least involve direct exposure to a number of great books and not merely the acquisition of factual information from text-books. The excellence of colonial higher education is proved by its fruits. When one contrasts the group of men who took the lead in the foundation of the American republic with the generations who came after them, it is difficult not to feel that throughout the nineteenth century there was a steady degeneration with respect to all those qualities which can be regarded as the fruits of a liberal education.

The classics continued to be the centre of the college curriculum until after the Civil War ; but with the decline of clerical influence and the decay of aristocracy this kind of education lost its social utility, and the result was a decrease in the number of college students. In the eighteen-seventies, however, higher education began to be revitalized. The growing public school system was now establishing contact with the university system. There was a rapid increase of public secondary schools, which bridged the gap between the elementary school and the college, and which made a university education possible for anybody who was not of below-average intelligence and who could obtain money for his living expenses as an undergraduate. The growth of industry was creating millionaires who were only too willing to have their names commemorated through lavish endowments for higher education. Meanwhile the university curriculum and methods of instruction were being drastically revised by a group of university presidents (who, under the American system, hold office permanently and have almost autocratic powers), of whom President Eliot of Harvard was the most influential. Eliot destroyed the supremacy of the classics, introduced into the curriculum a great variety of modern subjects, made the professional schools a vital part of the university, and instituted the ' elective ' system, under which the undergraduate was allowed considerable freedom to choose those subjects which appealed to him. Eliot's reforms were adopted, to a greater or less degree, by every large university in the country ; and their general acceptance, which made higher education both more democratic and more utilitarian, was followed by an enormous growth in college enrolments. The number of college students

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more than doubled between 1900 and 1920, and doubled again between 1920 and 1930 ; while during the same thirty-year period high school enrolment increased from seven hundred thousand to six and a half million.

A normal education now consists of eight years in an elementary school, followed by four years in a high school. A considerable proportion of the population then passes on to the universities, many of which, being supported by states or municipalities, are free, and entrance to which is open to anybody whose high school record has been satisfactory. After four years in a university the student can further prolong his educational career by spending one or more years acquiring a higher degree in a graduate school or by entering one of the professional schools. Under the elective system graduation is dependent upon the accumulation of a certain number of units of study which are counted as of equal value—a conception which has obvious affinities with the building of machines out of interchangeable parts in American mass-production industry. A satisfactory high school record means that a certain number of ' credits ' have been obtained for a certain number of different subjects. University graduation means the accumulation of one hundred and twenty points, which (except that a few courses, such as English composition and European history, are compulsory, and that about a quarter of the points must be concentrated on a particular field of study, known as a ' major ') can be distributed among different subjects pretty much as the undergraduate pleases. A course which meets three times a week for half a year has a value of three points, and a student who (in the opinion of the instructor giving the course) has passed it satisfactorily will add the three points to his total score. Under this system there are no comprehensive examinations, undergraduates are encouraged to acquire a smattering of knowledge in a very varied range of subjects, and those ' snap ' courses the instructors of which are known to require little work are apt to attract enormous enrolments.

To what extent this system provides anything which may be called an education is—to put it mildly—dubious. In proportion as the educational ladder has become longer, its standards have become lower ; so that a large part of the university course is devoted to acquiring general information which—in European countries—belongs in the secondary schools. Higher education

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ought probably to consist chiefly of intensive study of a particular field ; and in the United States such study begins only upon entry into a graduate or professional school. The vast growth of educational facilities in the 'twenties was, moreover, accompanied by an increasing emphasis on non-academic activities. Most of the major universities gathered round them an infinite variety of commercial and technical studies ; university presidents devoted themselves primarily to lavish and elaborate building programmes ; university and high school athletics acquired the proportions and the psychology of a big business, and their star performers the prestige of cinema actors ; and—in the words of Woodrow Wilson—the side-shows began to swallow up the circus.

The onset of the depression marked, however, a very healthy turning-point in higher education, as it did in almost every other aspect of American cultural activity. The 'thirties have seen a general reaction against the mass-production bargain-basement tendencies of the elective system and an increasing number of attempts to restore the old ideals of liberal education. One of the earliest symptoms of the change was the publication in 1930 of Abraham Flexner's *Universities American English German*, which exposed the corruption of standards in America and offered for imitation the German system. And though subsequent events have suggested that Mr. Flexner's praise of the German system must have been exaggerated, his startling revelations of the manner in which cultural ideals were being degraded in America have had a very salutary influence. During the 'thirties there has been a general tendency to abandon the elective system, with Harvard—once again—leading the way. A growing number of universities are now requiring that undergraduates should pursue a single integrated course of study instead of gathering their one hundred and twenty points by wandering at their own sweet will among all the hundreds of courses listed in the college catalogue, are requiring that graduation should be dependent on passing a final comprehensive examination, and are attempting to replace the supremacy of the lecture system, with its lack of personal contact between instructor and undergraduate, by a tutorial system.

The general tendency of the reforms has been towards transplanting the Oxford and Cambridge system into America—a tendency which is at least partly due to the influence of Rhodes

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Scholars. Other reformers, however, favour more drastic methods. The chief storm centre in American education is, at present, President Hutchins of Chicago, who has provoked violent controversies not so much by the changes introduced into his own university, which are largely an adaptation of the English system, as by his public pronouncements. President Hutchins and his closest associate, Professor Mortimer Adler, have proclaimed that education ought to pay less attention to the acquisition of scientific information and more attention to the inculcation of the basic philosophical principles underlying clear thinking and wise activity ; that the cardinal task of education is to teach people to think, read and write (which, as President Hutchins likes to point out, was the purpose of the mediæval trivium) and that this task is very rarely fulfilled ; and that the best kind of education is the direct and intensive study of the classics, literary philosophical and scientific, of the European cultural tradition. The controversy provoked by these very salutary doctrines has been somewhat confused by the admiration professed by Hutchins and Adler for the philosophy of Aristotle and St. Thomas and by their criticisms of the pretensions of modern science ; and (although neither Hutchins nor Adler is a Catholic) these philosophical proclivities are regarded by many liberals as politically suspect and as indicating, in general, a desire to return to the Middle Ages. Hutchins's ideas are at present being tried out in a small Maryland college, St. John's, under the leadership of Stringfellow Barr as president and Scott Buchanan as dean. The curriculum in this college now consists primarily of the intensive study of one hundred and twenty European classics (in which are included mathematical and scientific works as well as literature and philosophy, and which, incidentally, is combined with more laboratory work than is customary in American colleges).

American small colleges, being privately-endowed and free from political control, provide admirable opportunities for educational experiments ; and there are a large number which are attempting to work out remedies for the deficiencies of the larger institutions, varying from such relatively conservative institutions as Swarthmore in Pennsylvania, which concentrate on providing a good liberal education on the European model, to radical colleges like Antioch in Ohio and Black Mountain in North Carolina,

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which aim at curing the isolation of academic life by integrating study with work in industry and agriculture. The best-known of the experimental colleges, however, is perhaps Bennington in Vermont, which is restricted to women. Bennington has done away altogether with lectures and examinations, and very nearly with rules and regulations. Students, who are carefully selected and are asked to leave whenever they do not appear to be using their freedom profitably, work individually under the supervision of a faculty which has itself been chosen with unusual care.

In spite, however, of the value of these experiments in higher education, they scarcely touch the real problems, which are much more fundamental. The colleges cannot improve beyond a certain point unless they receive better material from the high schools ; and in the high schools, which are controlled by state and municipal governments, the difficulties of improvement are much greater. The belief that each child has an equal right to an education usually means, in practice, that little is done to segregate or encourage those of above-average ability, and that the pace of each school group is the pace of the slowest members of it. The principles and practices of public school system are, moreover, largely determined by the professional Schools of Education, which have had a very rapid growth during the twentieth century, which have evolved a most extraordinary and pretentious psychology jargon for the description of the simplest mental operations, and which specialize not in teaching literature or science but in teaching how to teach them (an educational discovery which appears to be capable of being extended almost indefinitely). And while it would perhaps be an exaggeration to say that all the time which every would-be teacher is required to spend in a School of Education is completely wasted, it would appear that persons of intelligence learn nothing in these institutions which they do not know already, and that whatever sound information they may impart is more than counterbalanced by the mental confusion caused by the jargon in which they impart it. The liaisons established between the Schools of Education and the public educational authorities have given them, nevertheless, a privileged position (there are at present more than two hundred thousand students enrolled in these institutions).

Still more significant is the problem of how a liberal education can retain its proper place at the heart of the educational system

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when it has ceased to have any direct economic or social utility. The best products of the English universities tend to become either civil servants or school masters ; and both these professions require a broad cultural education. In the United States, on the other hand, entrance into the civil service is based on narrowly technical qualifications, and both the civil service and school-teaching have relatively little prestige. A large majority of the graduates of the leading American universities either become business men or go to a professional school ; and for such persons the economic value of a university career consists primarily in its social contacts rather than in anything learnt in classrooms. The result is that relatively few university students have any reason for regarding non-technical education as a serious matter, and that the old liberal arts college is in danger of becoming partly an extension of the high school and partly a preparation for the professional school and of losing any character of its own. Ideally, the importance of a liberal education should be obvious enough to enable it to retain its prestige on its own merits ; unfortunately the number of persons who want education for its own sake and not for its incidental economic utility appears to be scarcely large enough to justify any such ideal conclusion.

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THE TRAGEDY OF BLOOD

AS you will gather, this paper has been put together in a very few days.[1] This must be my excuse for its misleading title. I had hoped to be able to say something about the Tragedy of Blood in general, but found on examination that my ideas were not so definite as I had assumed. I must, I am afraid, ask you to concentrate your attention on a narrower subject: on a single exponent of the Tragedy of Blood, John Webster; and at least for the greater part of our time on a single play of his, *The White Devil*.

Webster, like many or perhaps most of the Elizabethans, has been over-praised; more certainly and more dangerously he has been praised for the wrong reasons. In consequence there has developed a tendency either to praise him not at all, or to under-praise; and conflicts have arisen, mistaken, I think, on both sides, by which possibly right reasons for praise have been obscured.

For example, both his detractors and his admirers agree that he lacks constructive ability. His poetry, say the latter, is a poetry of flashes, of fragments; such a poetry, reply the former, is not poetry at all—or at any rate it is not dramatic poetry. Both I would say repose a very generous trust in general principles of criticism; whereas the matter of literature is of such variety that, unless general principles are continually tested and supplemented, they are as likely as not to mislead. Before allowing that Webster cannot construct, his admirers should perhaps consider whether the type of construction in which obviously he fails—in which dramatic tension is gradually increased through a number of acts, then decreased more swiftly but still gradually—whether this type of construction, though common, is the only type possible; and whether it is a type which, in *The White Devil*, he even attempted. And on the other hand the detractors should perhaps ask themselves whether, whatever the precision and homogeneity to be predicated of an ideal drama or poem—in which no word would be super-

[1] A paper read to the Doughty Society, Downing College.

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fluous, and no phrase in the slightest degree either above or below its context—human imbecillity allows this precision to be realized in a work of any length. If not, then in Webster's work it is important to consider not the fact that, but the degree to which, it contains inequalities. For this may not be so great as to prevent it being effective as an artistic—a poetic, a dramatic—whole.

Whether or not it is so can of course be decided only by reading it. In the rest of this paper I shall endeavour to explain why, after reading *The White Devil*, I think that it is so. Or at least that is what I shall try to do in part: for I shall be able to treat only the first of the above questions, about the play's construction. In any case this is what needs to be considered first: to those who, neglecting it, hasten (as is quite likely) to decide that defects outweigh excellencies in Webster's verse I can only say that the excellencies are undoubtedly great ; and perhaps more easily under-estimated than the defects are ignored.

The opening of the play has often been noted for its abruptness ; but has, I think, other qualities worthy of attention. Lodovico is announcing that he has been banished, Antonelli and Gasparo are condoling with him:

> LOD. Banisht. ANT. It greev'd me much to heare the sentence.
> LOD. Ha, Ha, ô *Democritus* thy Gods
> That governe the whole world. Courtly reward
> And punishment. Fortun's a right whore.
> If she give ought, she deales it in smal percels,
> That she may take away all at one swope.
> This tis to have great enemies, God quite them:
> Your woolfe no longer seems to be a woolfe
> Than when shees hungry.

Lodovico is moved: so much is obvious from the substance of his sentences. But also their brevity, and an emphasis which they acquire either by straddling the pentameter or by filling it to the point, suggest that this emotion is not beyond control and will lead to action. To what kind of action? for Ludovico contradicts himself. He pours scorn on the gods while at the same time he invokes their aid ; his enemy he considers to be now Fortune which is capricious, now great men who are malevolent ; the latter he

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hints are both hungry and satiate ; contemptible by nature (for they are wolves), but enviable for what they have been able to achieve. The contradictions are the more obvious because conjunctions are few ; and the sentences—this is an unusual connection or lack of connection between them—seem not so much to follow and resume, as to qualify or comment on one another as they lie side by side. It must I think be allowed that they do so ; and the speech in consequence taken not so much as an account of Ludovico as a piece of acting or material for such an account. This the reader must draft for himself, as it is not supplied from the stage.

What then is the account to be? As Ludovico appears both to believe and to disbelieve in order, whether human or divine, it is tempting to dismiss him as merely incoherent. But if he were so, he would be incapable of speech and action ; and of these the first is unlikely to be true, the second impossible. It may, I think, be nearer the truth that he realizes only faintly the nature and consequences of action, speech or belief ; and that, for the sake of saying or doing something, he is willing to adopt, not insincerely but ignorantly, any and any number of scraps of beliefs. His mind is disorderly, while at the same time it is decisive, and this is perhaps what his manner of speech is intended to convey: as the separate sentences fall on the ear they are decisive, they appear disorderly as they seek to fit into a whole.

Qualities of this kind are at any rate of sufficient importance for Webster to bring them into prominence by a contrast. The dialogue between Antonelli and Gasparo which immediately follows is so orderly as at first sight to appear mechanical ; and so feeble as to be bathetic at what, again at first sight, appears its climax:

> ANT. Come my Lord,
> You are justly dom'd ; looke but a little backe
> Into your former life: you have in three yeares
> Ruin'd the noblest Earldome. GAS. Your followers
> Have swallowed you like Mummia, and being sicke
> With such unnaturall and horrid Phisicke
> Vomit you up ith kennell. ANT. All the damnable degrees
> Of drinkings have you, you staggerd through—one Citizen
> Is Lord of two faire Manors cald you master,
> Only for Caviare. GAS. Those noblemen

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> Which were invited to your prodigall feastes,
> Wherein the Phænix scarce could scape your throtes,
> Laugh at your misery . . .
> . . . Worse than these,
> You have acted certaine Murders here in Rome,
> Bloody and full of horror.

The speeches begin and end in the middle of a line, and a seesaw-like balance is immediately obvious about them. The lines about murder could hardly be more perfunctory.

The dialogue has however positive qualities, and its function is not merely to be a foil to Ludovico. It would, I think, be as true to say that the latter's speech is foil to the dialogue: for as do the sentences within the speech, the two lie side by side commenting upon and qualifying one another. Once again the spectator is required to judge not so much between statements, as to base a judgment upon a group of them.

Antonelli and Gasparo speak of justice, which is a principle of order. Their justice is however of a peculiar kind, according to which extravagance and gluttony are less serious than murder. As has been said, murder is mentioned only perfunctorily ; it is also last in the dialogue ; while extravagance and gluttony which precede it are, on the other hand, not inadequately described. That Antonelli and Gasparo believe in a justice of this kind should not perhaps be suspected, even for a moment ; but if so, it is necessary only to glance at their descriptions. If these hint at any feeling at all—and I think they do—it is at approval of what they professedly condemn. Behind imitations of a drunkard's voice and gait,

> . . . All the damnable degrees
> Of drinkings have you, you staggerd through . . .

it is difficult not to be aware of complacency ; behind the verse about

> . . . prodigall feastes
> Wherein the Phænix scarce could scape your throtes . . .

of envy and admiration. Gasparo's and Antonelli's parade of the word justice, it seems clear, is mere hypocrisy.

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They are mocking rather than rebuking Ludovico ; or if they rebuke him at all, it is for not being sufficiently hypocritical as they are. To be sure of future indulgence, vice needs to take account both of public opinion and of its own resources. The former cannot be persistently outraged ; the latter, by a man in Ludovico's station, need to be husbanded. As he has indulged too early and too often, he is rightly a subject to ' jest upon.' The dialogue is an artifice—hence its artificial structure ; and by it the speakers intend that artifice shall be recommended. It shall be so by veiled precept, but still more by open example.

Ludovico however will not learn. His eyes, unaccustomed to the future, do not seize any of the benefits in the way of licence likely to flow from present constraint. The latter appears not prudence but affectation ; and in an aside to the audience he ridicules Gasparo and Antonelli's way of speaking:

> This Well goes with two buckets, I must tend
> The powring out of eather.

Later, when the affectation reaches its height in the lines about murder:

> You have acted certaine Murders here in Rome
> Bloody and full or horror,

his ridicule comes into the open. ' Las,' he replies, ' they were fleabytinges,' presenting Antonelli and Gasparo with a more adequate expression of their common views.

But he is not, I think, rebuking them for hypocrisy, any more than they have rebuked him. If he is the more sympathetic as he is the simpler character, he is not the more virtuous ; and any attempt to sympathize with him wholly or even to a marked degree would be to misread the scene. The mystifications and accommodations paraded by Antonelli and Gasparo get in his way as a man of action ; they discredit action on which he has been engaged in the past: impatiently therefore—but no more than impatiently ; certainly not in the interests of virtue—he brushes them aside.

I hope it will not appear I am refining too much on a small part of a comparatively unimportant scene. A tradition of some strength has to be broken: if it cannot be said that the scene and

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the play as a whole has received insufficient, it has received the wrong kind of attention. On the one hand, the romantically inclined have read into it admiration for Ludovico's precipitancy, which accordingly they have called courage or heroism ; the post-romantics on the other, rightly rejecting these as of no value, have concluded that there is no reference whatever to values in the play. Nor indeed in the whole of Webster ; whose work therefore is negligible. Whereas the truth, I am suggesting, would seem to be that here at any rate by opposing two negative values in such a way that neither dominates nor obscures the other ; that, like the sentences and the speeches we have considered, they continue side by side ; a pointed reference to positives is made. Antonelli and Gasparo rebuke Ludovico for his brutish lack of prudence ; he them, for their diabolic cunning. And thus, by something it would not be improper to call construction, standards are introduced into the picture of a world of evil ; though as yet there is no one in it who illustrates them by his actions or his words.

These deductions based on a few opening lines might I think be confirmed from other parts of the play. Throughout Ludovico shows himself to be a creature of impulses ; clear-headed enough for these to be followed with success, not for them to be compared one against the other and if need be suppressed.

> Instruction to thee,

says Monticelso,

> Comes like sweet showers to overhardned ground ;
> They wet, but peirce not deepe.

He falls in love with the Duchess, or rather ' pursues her with hot lust ' ; if Webster gives no warning of this, that I think is due not to his oversight, but to the nature of his theme. Upon the Duchess's death Ludovico swears to avenge her. And if Monticelso's refusal of support causes him for a moment to hesitate, a single sign of approval, or what he takes for such, precipitates him upon his course once again. Francisco easily makes him a devoted tool ; and at the end of the play the sight of his vengeance so fills him that he can admit the possibility of no other sensation :

> The racke, the gallowes, and the torturing wheele
> Shall be but sound sleepes to me, here's my rest—
> I limb'd this night-peece and it was my best.

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Here there is both intellectual and physical insensibility ; not as in a hero or martyr a triumph of intellect or morals over sense. Antonelli and Gasparo on the other hand are deemed worthy to be Francisco's accomplices, Antonelli at least saving his skin. But the clearest confirmation of what I have been trying to say is perhaps to be found in that part of the first scene not yet dealt with.

Its function, let me premiss, is to prepare the background against which, during the second scene, the principal characters are to appear. To use a common metaphor, the atmosphere is to be created in which they breathe. And if what has been said is at all true, this is done rather by actions than by words: Ludovico first executes a movement, then Antonelli and Gasparo—the reader being left to a very large extent to draw his own conclusions. In the opening lines the movements are comparatively sober, as if to establish that they are possible or likely in men. Webster wishes it to be clear that the subject he is portraying and criticizing is humanity. Afterwards it is open to him to make clearer what his criticism is to be. The movements are exaggerated, approaching near to caricature ; or, to keep within terms of the drama, to what Mr. Eliot in writing of *The Jew of Malta* called farce. After gossip which reveals to the audience that Brachiano pursues ' by close panderism . . . the honour of Vittoria Corombona ' Antonelli continues:

> Have a full man within you,
> Wee see that Trees beare no such pleasant fruite
> There where they grew first, as where they are new set:
> Perfumes the more they are chaf'd the more they render
> Their pleasing sents, and so affliction
> Expresseth vertue, fully, whether trew
> Or ells adulterate.

This note is familiar from other plays: it is that of ' For though the Camomile, the more it is trodden on, the faster is grows . . . ' But whereas Falstaff does not expect to be taken seriously when he talks in this way, Antonelli and Gasparo are unprepared for Ludovico's gibe:

> . . . Leave your painted comforts,
> Ile make Italian cut-works in their guts
> If ever I returne.

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Their sole rejoinder is however an 'O sir!'; it is their manners rather than their morals which Ludovico has outraged.

As the two sets of rogues leave the stage, Ludovico hopes for a quick death, advising Antonelli and Gasparo to make ready against a similar necessity. But they are so far from fearing it that they offer aid for his future plans. Thus they part, in spite of divergence in evil expressing mutual esteem; but, as has been said, this divergence and esteem are intended to rouse the audience to their common condemnation.

II.

In Scene II the principles of construction suggested by Scene I are employed for the ordering and presentation of far more important matter. The great Duke of Brachiano, of whom passing mention has already been made, is introduced in person, and with him the principal characters.

He is surrounded by the paraphernalia of greatness—coaches, train and lights. But he has no sooner summoned his confidant and, out of the midst of these, seized opportunity to whisper: BRACH. *Flamineo*. FLAM. My lord. BRACH. Quite lost, *Flamineo* than they are dismissed. In the play he is to sacrifice greatness to his passion.

The dialogue which follows is of the kind now familiar. The two speakers, in far from perfect sympathy one with another, are as far from perfect communication; neither gives himself a fair account of the other, and both need therefore to be read with equal attention. Only in that way is it possible to know what Webster thought of them, and what he intended the reader to think. On the one hand Brachiano continues the train of reflections, imprecise on the whole but in so far as it is otherwise by no means discreditable, suggested by his 'Quite lost.' This exclamation was one rather of love, if unlawful love, than of lust; of self-abandonment to another, than of self-assertion at another's expense. Accordingly, to Flamineo's news that Vittoria awaits him, Brachiano replies:

> Are wee so happy?

and again, a few minutes later,

> Wee are happie above thought, because 'bove merrit.

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Then prudence or conscience begins to disturb him:

> O but her jealous husband.

Finally this reminder of obstacles in the way of his passion rouses the fear that it may not be satisfied:

> O, should she faile to come—

While at the same time Flamineo pours forth a torrent of reflections on the lasciviousness of women, the imbecility of husbands, the vanity of love.

It has been objected to both Webster and Flamineo that the reflections are not new. This is true, but not therefore a fault. For Brachiano's incipient passion is a difficult problem: in so far as it inclines to vice and lust Flamineo welcomes it, as it promises a hold upon Brachiano; love and virtue on the other hand must loosen that hold perhaps even remove it if conscience, as it has begun, continues stirring. So he has to encourage the passion, and at the same time to degrade it. One way, the most obvious and perhaps the only way, is by assimilating it to the subjects of commonplace conversation, indecent and otherwise: things sanctioned or commanded by custom, but rendered at the same time sordid and contemptible.

The dialogue at cross-purposes, Flamineo deliberately ignoring the possibly higher purposes of Brachiano, thus serves to indicate a judgment on Flamineo; but Brachiano is also judged, in that he sees nothing incongruous in choosing Flamineo as confidant. The indecent commonplaces do not startle him into attention; they would not seem new to him—what is new is his passion, so new that he does not know how to handle it. He would be the predestined victim of Flamineo were not Vittoria—who is however another evil—at hand.

If we pause for a moment to look ahead, it will, I think, be seen that throughout the play Brachiano is characterized either by hesitancy and hebetude, as now, or by what naturally succeeds them in a mind, blindness and obstinacy. It is Vittoria who operates the change. When at length introduced into her presence, his first speech is a confession of inarticulacy:

> Let me into your bosome happy Ladie,
> Powre out instead of eloquence my vowes.

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She replies with mockery that is scarcely veiled:

> Sir, in the way of pitie
> I wish you hart-hole . . .
> Sure Sir a loathed crueltie in Ladyes
> Is as to Doctors many funerals:
> It takes away their credit.

Nevertheless her answer has assured him that he is articulate to some degree; she has acknowledged his passion, given him confidence in himself; he is overwhelmed with gratitude, he is hers from that moment. He can be jealous of her, as a possible object of another man's veneration; but that there is anything about her which should not be venerated, he obstinately refuses to admit. Though he has shared her crimes, for him she remains a 'good woman' to the end. He shares her shame in the public court, for her sake he defies Grand Duke and Pope. He begins to defy even Flamineo; but that is too late, when a common ruin is enveloping them all.

Vittoria herself is partly defined by the above and similar answers to Brachiano—confident, condescending, even impertinent; at the same time well-judged and effective: more clearly by her share in a concerted piece which is the central, as it is the most remarkable, passage in this scene. I call it concerted because, like the dialogues considered hitherto, all its parts are of equal importance and must be considered at once; but also, by a device of eavesdropping and asides, they are made so to speak to sound at once. The writing almost ceases to be writing and to be dramatic; it becomes operatic and almost a score.

Vittoria and Flamineo are in the centre of the stage, conversing both openly, and in undertones. The open conversation is intended for Camillo, Vittoria's husband, who is listening off. He has been promised that, if he would retire, Flamineo would woo Vittoria for him, to receive him back into her graces. Every public compliment to Camillo however is cancelled by a whispered slight:

> Shall a gentleman so well descended as *Camillo*—a lousy slave that within these twenty yeares rode . . . mongst spits and dripping panes . . .

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Thus two parts are already sounding at once, affecting and enriching each other. For it is as impossible for the audience to take the whisperings as it to take the shoutings at the value they would have in isolation. Camillo has already been exhibited—not an impressive person, but one who has shown signs of good feeling and good sense (he has, for example, refused to believe either that Brachiano's designs are a figment of his imagination, or that Vittoria is licentious because she is denied liberty) ; further he has confided his interests to Flamineo, who is therefore not only abusing him, but abusing him grossly ; finally Camillo's very weakness and insignificance render the whispered detraction as unnecessary, as the public encomia are absurd. All this is, I think, kept before the hearer's mind by the contrast between the two ; who is in consequence moved not so much to laughter by Flamineo's buffoonery, as to distaste. Flamineo is playing the fool not primarily for the audience, but for himself. The task he has undertaken degrades himself as well as Brachiano ; as it deprives him of self-respect he can continue with it only by procuring continual diversion—as in this uproarious way.

At the same time a third part is sounding—Vittoria's. It consists chiefly of rests. To Flamineo's first representation that her husband is discontented she replies disingenuously that she has paid him marks of public respect: ' I did nothing to displease him ; I carved to him at supper.' After that, though her desire to be rid of Camillo is as urgent as Flamineo's, she is silent ; and that she gives no sign of approval to his buffoonery must, I think, be taken to mean that she disapproves. She has of course no need of it to continue in her task ; which if evil, is not so evil as Flamineo's. She seeks, not to obtain a blackmailer's hold on Brachiano, but to reign publicly as his duchess ; to commit adultery, to procure murder—but not to forfeit all claims to her own or her fellows' esteem. She seeks indeed the very opposite, though by mistaken means. And so her silence at this point performs, like almost everything else, at least a double function: it is a criticism of Flamineo, strengthening the criticism already formed by the audience ; at the same time it is a criticism on herself, for what she does not approve of she must nevertheless endure. Though she despises Flamineo, he is a valuable ally whom as yet she dare not offend ; it is some time before, though sick at the baiting

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of Camillo, she ventures to suggest that it be cut short: 'How shals rid him hence?'

The passage is complicated to a yet further degree. For not only Camillo, but Brachiano, is listening ;[1] is listening too for a purpose very similar to Camillo's. To him, as to Camillo, Flamineo has promised that he will woo Vittoria. So that everything Flamineo says openly has not only a double sense, in so far as it is or is not understood to be qualified by what at the same time he is whispering ; it has also a third and a fourth sense, in so far as it is understood to apply to Camillo or to Brachiano. Each of course applies it to himself, but Vittoria and the audience apply it to both. And for the audience there results a final sense, compounded of all the rest ; if indeed it can be called a single sense, when it is rich and complicated. It is rather a harmony or a *fugato*, to return to the metaphor of a concert which I have already used ; which can be heard only by reading the play, which cannot be reproduced in a single train of words, but glossed only, now from one aspect, now from another.

In dealing with simpler dialogues, I have suggested that both parts to them should be considered together ; and that neither can be taken as, in isolation, summing up the dialogue and therefore capable of standing alone. This is much more obviously true of passages from a piece of writing like the above. Abstracted from their context they can give rise only to obviously unsatisfactory and therefore widely divergent opinions. The following adjuration of Flamineo's has for example been accepted, according to the predilections of the critic, now as a 'flash' of genuine poetry, now as a piece of fustian:

> Thou shalt lye in a bed stuft with turtles feathers, swoone in perfumed lynnen like the fellow was smothered in roses—so perfect shall be thy happinesse, that as men at Sea thinke land and trees and shippes go that way they go, so both heaven and earth shall seeme to go your voyage. Shalt meete him, tis fixt with nayles of dyamonds to inevitable necessitie.

But the passage is neither the one nor the other ; rather it has

[1] No editor gives this in a stage-direction ; but it seems to me obvious that it is happening.

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aspects of both, being a fragment of close and careful dramatic writing. Now it directs the reader's attention to Brachiano, now to Camillo, of both of whom it is spoken ; now to Flamineo, who speaks it. This diversity of aspect and function would, it might be thought, be apparent from the fragment itself ; from the otherwise inexplicable transition from the loose ' swoon in perfumed linen . . . ' to the restrained ' So perfect shall be thy voyage . . . ' ; and again from the latter to the extravagant ' 'tis fixed with nails and diamonds . . . ' But still more is it apparent from the fragment in its context ; where it is followed immediately by Vittoria's impatient and business-like ' How shals rid him hence?' This should discredit at least any attempt to deal with it as a flash of poetry.

I am sorry I have had to descend into such detail. Perhaps however it has served to make clear to some extent how I think the play should be read. All the play, I believe, should be read in a like manner. For the remaining part of Act I, for example, the concerted piece is carried on with Brachiano and Vittoria in the centre of the stage, Flamineo and Zanche on one side as a satyric chorus, and Cornelia behind. For the first time in the play she is a representative of virtue. Her presence is, to the audience, a running comment on the speeches of all the other characters ; especially upon Brachiano's to Vittoria :

> You are lodged within his arms who shall protect you,
> From all the feavers of a jealous husband,
> From the poore envy of our flegmaticke Dutchesse—

In appearance it is an offer of chivalrous protection ; when in reality—as Vittoria knows, as Flamineo knows, as Brachiano would know if he would think—it is an undertaking to commit a double murder. Cornelia by her interruption tries to make him think ; but it is too late. And so Act II is not a succession of scenes between Isabella and the Grand Duke, the Grand Duke and Brachiano, Brachiano and Isabella, then between all three ; rather the scenes interpenetrate one another, are to be thought of, so to speak, as existing side by side. Isabella asks her brother the Grand Duke to intercede with her husband, Brachiano ; he promises to do so but does not, preferring to talk politics ; the dukes quarrel but, recognizing their need of each other, are reconciled ; Isabella

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is then sacrificed to Brachiano—or rather would be, if she did not seize the occasion for sacrificing herself. In Act III the Cardinal's denunciation of Vittoria should not be thought of as singularly weak, as it is general in its terms ; but weighed along with his confession to the Grand Duke that, against Vittoria, they have no case. If this is done, it will not appear necessary to exalt Vittoria at the expense of her opponents ; though shameless, she can show to advantage against those who apparently believe they ' have their salvation by patent.' Or in the last Act, Flamineo's final attempt to despoil Vittoria is but one with the attempts he has been making on Brachiano, and would have continued to make had he not been forestalled by death. Taking advantage of widowhood she is seeking to be rid of the past, to set herself up at last as a great lady, even as a *dévote* ; by that past Flamineo compels her, giving her the opportunity, to seek his murder. He is about to take revenge for this and for consistent betrayal when Ludovico appears prepared to be rid of him ; then the young Duke appears determined to be rid of them all.

This sort of connection I am suggesting exists between sentences within certain speeches ; between the speeches in certain scenes, and between the majority of scenes themselves, exists, I believe, between all the acts. They are to be thought of not so much as following one another, but as existing side by side. They come of course in chronological succession, but Webster's interest is so little in this that either he does not suggest it (thereby laying himself open to the charge of not knowing how to construct) : or he does so by undistinguished means—such as dumb-shows, or soliloquies like Francisco's. This is not a soliloquy in the accepted meaning of the term, but the speech of a prolocutor. The acts as a whole do not show the development of different stages of the same story, perhaps their main purpose is not even to show the different stages. Rather I think they show different aspects of the same theme—the workings of evil which, though among the same people, must vary indefinitely. For it cannot rest until it is extinguished.

To read a play in this way is of course more difficult than to read it in the normal way. But perhaps we are becoming accustomed to the difficulty. With the disappearance of the Victorian notion of character, and in particular of developing character, as the

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most important element in drama, the latter's complexity as a pattern of elements all of which must be envisaged at once is becoming apparent to us. We no longer look at the play of *Hamlet* as or through the character of Hamlet; somewhat similarly, I am suggesting there is no character in the White Devil—neither Vittoria nor Flamineo nor Cornelia—through which the play can be looked at.

This is however a simplification. To some extent we can look at the play through *Hamlet* because to some extent it is possible and we are indeed invited to sympathize with him. There would not seem to be any character in the White Devil with whom we are invited to sympathize to any extent that matters—not even Cornelia, the representative of virtue. She is rather a point of reference than a character—a point from which we can take our moral bearings when, amid the amount and variety of vice, they are in danger of being obscured.

Two questions immediately suggest themselves: whether it is possible to write a play totally deprived of a sympathetic character, and whether if possible it is worth doing? The first question is academic, since obviously the play has been written; so is the second at least for me who hold the play to be successful. Both are however worth raising, since they make clear the cost at which any success of this kind must be purchased. There can be no character on the stage who can dominate the whole action; or—to make a possibly more modest demand—whose summing up and account of the action the spectator—even temporarily—can trust. A powerful influence for unity is thus absent.

I have already said how I think this disadvantage is overcome in *The White Devil*. I have repeated that no single party to a dialogue, that no single sentence in a speech can be taken as completely representative; both parties, all sentences must be considered, and as far as possible impartially. And I have suggested that if they are so considered it will be seen how one serves to define the other, how a reference to a common standard in both of them becomes clear, how in consequence—though it may have no character as agent—an important moral unity is imposed.

Let me then proceed to the second question—is this worth doing? And the answer must depend on the purpose for which it is done. It will be in the affirmative if there is a purpose which is of

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value, and which can be achieved in no other way.

There is, I think, one such, and I have already hinted what it is. It is the portrayal of a world of evil—not wholly evil of course, for such a world could not be conceived ; but one in which evil preponderates, and which therefore is working out its own destruction. This could not be presented as comprehended wholly or even largely by a single character ; for of its essence it is incomprehensible. Yet its existence at various times in history is undoubted.

Here I return to the large theme suggested in my title ; but only to touch upon it. The Tragedy of Blood seems to me to be the attempt of a succession of dramatists to deal with a world of evil, the existence of which was borne in upon them in late Elizabethan, early Jacobean times. Most of them attempted to do so by showing it, so to speak, from outside—by its effects on a comparatively virtuous person, not a member of itself. Such a person goes mad or is destroyed: the first example I suppose is Hieronymo, the most celebrated Lear. And the world of evil survives them—from outside it seems perfectly comprehensible, there is no reason why it should not go on. In Webster, however, or at least in *The White Devil*, the evil world is presented from within: it seems confusion, pointless activity, in the mind of the spectator alone there is awakened the notion of order ; he desires vehemently to see it transferred to the stage and so his attention is held until the close of the fifth act. With the arrival of a new ruler, a new generation, the whole evil world is destroyed.

JAMES SMITH.

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LITERARY CRITICISM IN FRANCE (II)

IV. BAUDELAIRE.

THE more we study the criticism of the past, the more obvious it becomes that critics can be divided broadly into two main groups—those whose interest is purely 'historical,' and those whose work remains 'actual' and can still help to form taste. Many of the critics in the first group have been men of outstanding ability; their work is still good reading; it provides us with useful information about the development of critical theory and the condition of taste at a particular period; but there its utility ends. The first group includes Dryden and Johnson in England, Boileau and Voltaire in France, and it is coming more and more to include Sainte-Beuve and Taine. The second group includes Coleridge and Arnold as well as Baudelaire and Gourmont.

What is not perhaps so obvious is that, though the life of a critic is necessarily shorter than that of an imaginative writer, the time factor is not decisive. Boileau's interest is purely historical, but parts of Sainte-Évremond's work can still be read with profit; and though they were contemporaries, Baudelaire's criticism is more actual than Taine's. Nor is it simply a matter of being 'right' about an author. Dryden was right in his placing of Shakespeare and Boileau in his placing of Villon; but though this was of great importance at the time, it has not prolonged the life of their criticism. A critic's value depends in the last resort on the quality of his sensibility and on his ability to stand aloof from the more ephemeral theories of his time.

These are some of the reasons why Baudelaire's importance as a critic remains great while that of his contemporaries diminishes. He was potentially the greatest French critic of the century and he possessed in a high degree all the essential attributes of criticism. There is no doubt that his output would have been still more impressive had he been able to work in more congenial circumstances. We know from his *Letters*, however, that many of his critical studies were written because he needed the money to pay his

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debts. He could not always choose his own subjects and he was not always free to express his true opinions. The result was that he expended his great gifts on minor writers and minor painters whose names only survive in his criticism. We may wonder, too, whether the long and flattering tributes to Hugo and Gautier would have been written if Baudelaire had felt able to dispense with their patronage.

It needs a real effort to read through *L'Art romantique* and the *Curiosités esthétiques*, but Baudelaire's criticism is so fragmentary and scattered that the effort is a necessary one. There is a good deal that is not of great value ; the excursions into æsthetic theory are not particularly helpful ; and some of the theories like the theory of *correspondances* have not worn well. But the effort is well repaid. Baudelaire's best criticism is a valuable guide to his own practice, and his comments on contemporary schools and writers illuminate the intricacies of the French literary scene as no other criticism of the time does. Finally, it is possible to extract a small body of criticism which is of permanent value and a model of how good criticism should be written.

' Criticism,' said Baudelaire, ' should be partial, passionate and political, that is to say, written from an exclusive point of view, but from the point of view which opens up the widest horizons.' His great merit as a critic lies, I think, in the fact that he possessed a genuinely philosophic mind and an extremely acute sensibility—two gifts which instead of destroying completed one another. He had an extraordinary faculty of going straight to the heart of a matter, in perceiving the importance of an artist or a movement in relation to ' the present time.' It is interesting to compare an extract from Sainte-Beuve's address on ' Tradition in Literature,' which was delivered in 1858, with some passages on the same subject from Baudelaire's ' Des Ecoles et Des Ouvriers ' in the 1846 Salon. This is Sainte-Beuve:

> ' Mais l'atticisme, mais l'urbanité, mais le principe de sens et de raison qui s'y mêle à la grâce, ne nous en séparons pas. Le sentiment d'un certain beau conforme à notre race, à notre éducation, à notre civilisation, voilà ce dont il ne faut jamais se départir . . .
>
> Pour maintenir la tradition, il ne suffit point toutefois de

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la bien rattacher à ses monuments les plus élevés et les plus augustes ; il convient de la vérifier, de la contrôler sans cesse sur les points les plus rapprochés, de la rajeunir même, et de la tenir dans un rapport perpétuel avec ce qui est vivant. Ici nous touchons à une question assez délicate ; car il ne s'agit pas de venir introduire dans l'enseignement des noms trop nouveaux, de juger hors de propos des ouvrages du jour, de confondre les fonctions et les rôles.'

Comparing the order of the great tradition with the chaos and confusion of his own times, Baudelaire writes:

' Dans l'un, turbulence, tohu-bohu de styles et de couleurs, cacophonie de tons, trivialités énormes, prosaïsme de gestes et d'attitudes, noblesse de convention, *poncifs* de toutes sortes, et tout cela visible et clair, non-seulement dans les tableaux juxtaposés, mais encore dans le même tableau, bref,—absence complète d'unité, dont le résultat est une fatigue effroyable pour l'esprit et pour les yeux.

Dans l'autre, ce respect qui fait ôter leurs chapeaux aux enfants, et vous saisit l'âme, comme la poussière des tombes et des caveaux saisit la gorge, est l'effet, non point du vernis jaune et de la crasse du temps, mais de l'unité, de l'unité profonde . . .

Là des écoles, et ici des ouvriers émancipés.

Il y avait encore des écoles sous Louis XV, il y en avait une sous l'Empire,—une école, c'est-à-dire une foi, c'est-à-dire l'impossibilité du doute. Il y avait des élèves unis par des principes communs, obéissant à la règle d'un chef puissant, et l'aidant dans tous ses travaux.'[1]

It is impossible not to be struck by the contrast between Sainte-Beuve's highflown rhetoric, which gets no nearer the concrete than '*un certain beau conforme à notre race*,' and the intense feeling behind '*ce respect qui . . . vous saisit l'âme, comme la poussière . . . saisit la gorge*' or, in another place, the ironic reference to '*quelques excentriques, sublimes et souffrants*.' Tradition in literature, whatever else it means, must mean continuity of feeling. Now it is clear that Sainte-Beuve's address is lip-service to an abstraction. He was like most Frenchmen aware of tradition in a general way, but his attitude is historical and has nothing of the

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extraordinary actuality of Baudelaire's criticism. It was a closed circle and the only modern master who was not a Frenchman for whom he found a place was Shakespeare. He saw that modern writers must be incorporated in the ancient framework, but the process was to be a purely mechanical one. He did not *feel* the relation between the modern writer and the masters of the past ; his attitude, as expressed in the last three lines, was simply that of the selection committee of some public gallery. Baudelaire's criticism, on the other hand, is a perfect example of his combination of sensibility and wide powers of generalization. He feels the unity of the old order and the chaos of the new ; his ' *vaste population de médiocrités . . . qui cherchent à se faire un caractère par un système d'emprunts contradictoires* ' is an admirably concrete statement of dilemma which is complacently ignored by Sainte-Beuve ; and when he finds the source of the trouble in an absence of ' faith ' we can have no doubt about the correctness of his diagnosis.

Baudelaire was less of a technical philosopher than Taine or Gourmont and his mind was more flexible than theirs. Indeed, it is evident from his insistence on Original Sin both in his criticism and in the letters and diaries that his point of view was primarily theological. In the essay on ' Le Peintre de la Vie Moderne ' he wrote :

> ' La plupart des erreurs relatives au beau naissent de la fausse conception du xviii[e] siècle relative à la morale. La nature fut prise dans ce temps-là comme base, source et type de tout bien et de tout beau possibles. La négation du péché originel ne fut pas pour peu de chose dans l'aveuglement général de cette époque. Si toutefois nous consentons à en référer simplement au fait, visible à l'expérience de tous les âges et à la *Gazette des Tribunaux*, nous verrons que la nature n'enseigne rien, ou presque rien, c'est-à-dire qu'elle *contraint* l'homme à dormir, à boire, à manger, et à se garantir, tant bien que mal, contre les hostilités de l'atmosphère. C'est elle aussi qui pousse l'homme à tuer son semblable, à le manger, à le séquestrer, à le torturer ; car, sitôt que nous sortons de l'ordre des nécessités et des besoins pour entrer dans celui du luxe et des plaisirs, nous voyons que la nature ne peut conseiller que le crime.'[2]

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Although this is a dogmatic statement, it does not inhibit the critic as Taine's dogmatism does. It does provide a basis for constructive criticism ; it does, when elaborated, help us to understand the causes and the weaknesses of the naturalist movement in French literature.

Baudelaire shows the same sureness of touch, the same faculty for going straight to the root of the matter, when he passes judgment—an admirably generous and impartial judgment—on the Romantic Movement:

> ' Certainement il y aurait injustice à nier les services qu'a rendus l'école dite romantique. Elle nous rappela à la vérité de l'image, elle détruisit les poncifs académiques, et même, au point de vue supérieur de la linguistique, elle ne mérite pas les dédains dont l'ont iniquement couverte certains pédants impuissants. Mais par son principe même, l'insurrection romantique était condamnée à une vue courte. La puérile utopie de l'école de *l'art pour l'art*, en excluant la morale, et souvent même la passion, était nécessairement stérile. Elle se mettait en flagrante contravention avec le génie de l'humanité. Au nom des principes supérieurs qui constituent la vie universelle, nous avons le droit de la déclarer coupable d'hétérodoxie . . . '[3]

These passages are both interesting because they show that in making a critical judgment Baudelaire uses a definite body of principles as a point of reference. It is by this standard that he condemns the excesses of Romanticism and the statement that it excludes morality, is a philosophical way of pointing out its fundamental immaturity.

His extraordinary critical sensibility is still more evident in particular judgments. What could be fairer or more discriminating than his opinion of Hugo—Hugo who at that time was universally regarded as ' the great poet?'

> ' M. Victor Hugo, dont je ne veux certainement pas diminuer la noblesse et la majesté, est un ouvrier beaucoup plus adroit qu'inventif, un travailleur bien plus correct que créateur. Delacroix est quelquefois maladroit, mais essentiellement créateur. M. Victor Hugo laisse voir dans tous ses tableaux, lyriques et dramatiques, un système d'alignement et de contrastes uniformes.

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L'excentricité elle-même prend chez lui des formes symétriques. Il possède à fond et emploie froidement tous les tons de la rime, toutes les ressources de l'antithèse, toutes les tricheries de l'apposition. C'est un compositeur de décadence ou de transition, qui se sert de ses outils avec une dextérité véritablement admirable et curieuse. M. Hugo était naturellement académicien avant que de naître, et si nous étions encore au temps des merveilles fabuleuses, je croirais volontiers que les lions verts de l'Institut, quand il passait devant le sanctuaire courroucé, lui ont souvent murmuré d'une voix prophétique: "Tu seras de l'Académie!" '[4]

In another place:

' M. Victor Hugo est un grand poète scuptural qui a l'oeil fermé à la spiritualité.'[5]

He says brilliantly of Ingres:

' Le grand défaut de M. Ingres, en particulier, est de vouloir imposer à chaque type qui pose sous son oeil un perfectionnement plus ou moins despotique, emprunté au répertoire des idées classiques.'[6]

Criticism is not so rich in colour that we can afford to overlook the following passage from the fine essay on Constantin Guys:

' La Turquie a fourni aussi à notre cher G d'admirables motifs de compositions: les fêtes du Baïram, splendeurs profondes et ruisseleantes, au fond desquelles apparaît, comme un soleil pâle, l'ennui permanent du sultan défunt.'[7]

No one excels Baudelaire in ' placing ' a bad writer or a bad painter. He writes of Hégésippe Moreau, for example:

' Quelque sujet et quelque genre qu'il traite, il est élève de quelqu'un. A une forme empruntée il n'ajoute d'original que le mauvais ton, si toutefois une chose aussi universelle que le mauvais ton peut être dite originale . . . Ce n'est pas la volupté de l'épicurien, c'est plutôt la sensualité claustrale, échauffée, du cuistre, sensualité de prison et de dortoir.'[8]

He observes of a bad painter:

' Je hais cet homme parce que ses tableaux ne sont point de

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la peinture, mais une masturbation agile et fréquente, une irritation de l'épiderme français.'

Finally, one should look at the criticism of Balzac which is buried like hidden treasure in the dreary wastes of the essay on Gautier:

'Balzac, grand, terrible, complexe aussi, figure le monstre d'une civilisation, et toutes ses luttes, ses ambitions et ses fureurs . . . J'ai mainte fois été étonné que la grande gloire de Balzac fût de passer pour un observateur ; il m'avait toujours semblé que son principal mérite était d'être visionnaire, et visionnaire passioné. Tous ses personnages sont doués de l'ardeur vitale dont il était animé lui-même. Toutes ses fictions sont aussi profondément colorées que les rêves. Depuis le sommet de l'aristocratie jusqu'aux bas-fonds de la plèbe, tous les acteurs de sa *Comédie* sont plus âpres à la vie, plus actifs et rusés dans la lutte, plus patients dans le malheur, plus goulus dans la jouissance, plus angéliques dans le dévouement, que la comédie du vrai monde ne nous les montre. Bref, chacun, chez Balzac, même les portières, a du génie. Toutes les âmes sont des armes chargées de volonté jusqu'à la gueule. C'est bien Balzac lui-même. Et comme tous les êtres du monde extérieur s'offraient à l'oeil de son esprit avec un relief puissant et une grimace saisissante, il a fait se convulser ses figures ; il a noirci leurs ombres et illuminé leurs lumières. Son goût prodigieux du détail, qui tient à une ambition immodérée de tout voir, de tout faire voir, de tout deviner, de tout faire deviner, l'obligeait d'ailleurs à marquer avec plus de force les lignes principales, pour sauver la perspective de l'ensemble.'[9]

There is, perhaps, more genuine criticism in this passage of Baudelaire's than in the ninety pages of Taine's essay.

V. Remy de Gourmont.

'As I have already explained on several occasions,' wrote Remy de Gourmont,' contrary to the opinion generally held, criticism is perhaps the most subjective of all literary forms. It is a perpetual confession on the part of the critic. He may think that he is analysing the works of other people, but it is himself

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that he is revealing and exposing to the public. This necessity explains very well why criticism is as a rule so mediocre and why the critic seldom manages to hold our attention even when he is dealing with questions in which we are most keenly interested. In order to be a good critic, indeed, one must possess a strong personality. The critic must impose himself on the reader and to this end he must rely not on the choice of subject, but on the quality of his own mind. The subject is of small importance in art, or at any rate it is only one part of art ; it is of no more importance in criticism where it is never more than a pretext.'[10]

This is not a complete definition of the function of criticism, nor, as we shall see from Gourmont's own work, is it wholly sound ; but it draws attention to three points which are seen to be of particular importance when we remember the weaknesses of Sainte-Beuve and Taine. In the first place, it insists on the personal factor in criticism and is therefore a corrective to the attempts of nineteenth-century critics to reduce criticism to an exact science. In the second place, although there can be no substitute for personal sensibility, this alone is not enough. Criticism must have behind it the whole force of the critic's personality, the whole force powerful, independent mind. In the third place, and perhaps the most important of all, we find a distinguished critic asserting for the first time that criticism is valuable for its own sake and is not (as Taine tried to make it) a branch of some other science.[11]

It was the clarity with which Gourmont grasped this third point that helped to make him one of the most distinguished critics of his time. The *Problême du style* has had, directly and indirectly, a considerable influence on contemporary English criticism. It is one of the finest works of general criticism that has appeared during the past fifty years and though it deals almost exclusively with French writers, it is essentially a European work and should be almost as valuable to the English as to the French specialist. The papers collected in the seven volumes of the *Promenades littéraires* have lost none of their freshness with the passing of time. When they first appeared these brief and eminently readable *chroniques* were something new in literary journalism. They took the place of Sainte-Beuve's elaborate *causeries* with their vast parade of erudition. Gourmont was not only more stimulating, more of a critic than Sainte-Beuve, but in

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the best of the *Promenades littéraires*—notably in the studies of Renan, Brunetière and Lemaître—he contrived in the space of nine or ten pages to say the essential about his authors. No one who works on the same authors can afford to overlook what Gourmont has said about them ; and it is difficult to think of any collection of literary essays to which one returns more often or more profitably.

In spite of his great merits, however, Gourmont's criticism leaves the reader with an ill-defined sense of dissatisfaction. I have sometimes thought that this impression may be due to the economy imposed by the *chronique*, to the fact that it may appear thin when compared with the weighty studies of Gourmont's immediate predecessors ; but constant re-reading suggests that Gourmont's particular faults are inseparably connected with his particular virtues and the two can only be discussed together.

' *La seule recherche féconde,*' he wrote in the Preface to the *Problème du style*, ' *est la recherche du non-vrai.*' It is a concise statement not only of his own method, but also of the temper which informed the whole of his writings. He was a sceptic and an amateur of physiology, possibly because physiology seemed to provide the only certain foothold in an age of crumbling systems. His scepticism was complete, but it was a genial scepticism. His criticism is singularly free from the faults which make critics of the same period who wrote in English seem crude and provincial. The fact that he was a Frenchman and his background Catholic enabled him to appreciate the issues better than an Englishman and preserved him from the Nonconformist conscience which has always been one of the greatest enemies of clear thinking. Although he remarked bluntly in his paper on Renan ' *Je n'aime guère le style des écrivains dont je déteste la pensée,*' his treatment of writers whose beliefs he did not share was often remarkable for its justice and impartiality. His description of Verlaine as ' one of France's greatest Catholic poets ' errs, perhaps, on the side of generosity ; but in the *Problème du style* he said admirably of Bossuet (whose ' thought ' can hardly have been sympathetic to him) :

> ' Bossuet écrit pour édifier ou pour convaincre, mais sa sensibilité générale est si riche, sa vitalité si profonde, son énergie si violente, qu'il peut se dédoubler, et rester un écrivain en ne voulant être qu'un apôtre ' (p. 49).

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His criticism of the *Vie de Jésus*, which one might have expected him to find more sympathetic than Bossuet, is particularly interesting:

> ' Le plus contestable, pour le fond, des ouvrages de Renan, *la Vie de Jésus*, est précisément celui qui est le moins bien écrit. L'incertitude de l'idée a fait vaciller le style ; cela tremblote comme une lampe d'église, une nuit que le vent souffle par un vitrail brisé. Dans beaucoup d'autres écrits de Renan, la souplesse solide de son écriture s'enroule merveilleusement à la solidité flexible de sa pensée. M. Brunetière parle de la " souveraine clarté " de sa langue, mais comment peut-il admirer une transparence, alors fâcheuse, qui n'a d'autre résultat que de faire mieux voir le trouble ou le néant du fond? Mais comment même peut-il se faire que l'eau soit pure et transparente quand le fond est bourbeux? Les ondes ne sont claires que si elles s'appuient sur la fermeté d'un fond de roche.'[12]

This marks the end of the method, practised by Sainte-Beuve and Taine, of treating a writer's ' style ' and his ' thought ' as though they were in some way separable. Gourmont was pre-eminently a literary critic and in this passage he uses the methods of literary criticism to expose the fundamental weaknesses of Renan's work as a whole.

In spite of limitations of which I shall have something to say later, the sceptical approach is impressive in its astringency and up to a point it constitutes a genuine intellectual discipline. Gourmont was one of the first writers who systematically attacked vague romantic appreciation and tried to make criticism not a science, but scientific in a wide sense which was not Taine's sense ; and his declaration that ' style is a specialisation of sensibility ' is a landmark in the history of criticism. The most valuable parts of the *Problème du style* are, indeed, those in which Gourmont sets out to define sensibility. In the well-known passage on Flaubert he wrote:

> ' Flaubert incorporait toute sa sensibilité à ses œuvres ; et par sensibilité, j'entends, ici comme partout, le pouvoir général de sentir tel qu'il est inégalement développé en chaque être humain. La sensibilité comprend la raison elle même, qui n'est que de la sensibilité cristallisée. Hors de ses livres, où il se

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transvasait goutte à goutte, jusqu'à la lie, Flaubert est fort peu intéressant ; il n'est plus que lie : son intelligence se trouble, s'exaspère en une fantaisie incohérente . . . Loin que son œuvre soit impersonnelle, les rôles sont ici renversés : c'est l'homme qui est vague et tissé d'incohérences ; c'est l'œuvre qui vit, respire, souffre et sourit noblement.' (p. 117).

For Gourmont the great writer is the writer whose work is his life, and the bad writer is the writer who is divided between writing and action. Thus he observes acutely of the solitaries of Port-Royal :

' Ils écrivaient d'un style tout extérieur, où ils n'incorporaient presque aucune parcelle de leur sensibilité, la gardant toute pour leur vie, pour leur activité religieuse.' (p. 48).

The definition of sensibility is undeniably impressive, but when we find Gourmont writing :

' Racine, dont le style est si rarement plastique, garde pour ses maîtresses d'abord, pour Dieu ensuite, presque toute sa sensibilité. Le sentiment profond de l'amour, qui était en lui, n'a pas passé dans les actes de ses personnages ; ils expriment des passions extrêmes en un style abstrait, glacé, et diplomatique' (pp. 50-1).

it is impossible not to feel disconcerted. There are, I think, two explanations. One is that the definition of sensibility is not as conclusive as it sounds. The other is that like most French critics, Gourmont was more impressive when making general statements of principle than when elucidating a text. They are both worth discussion.

Flaubert was a great novelist, but we may doubt whether he was the perfect writer for which Gourmont took him. Indeed, his admiration appears to be one of the symptoms of the peculiar limitations of his own critical sensibility. His emphasis on the physiological element in sensibility was timely and important, but when he observes

' Le style est un produit physiologique et l'un des plus constants, quoique dans la dépendance des diverses fonctions vitales ' (*ibid.*, p. 19).

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we may suspect that in practice the definition was narrower than one would expect from the passage on Flaubert given above, that it was reduced to a physiological function in the interests of an inadequate metaphysic. It explains, for example, why Gourmont should admire Flaubert's style, which is rich in the expression of physical sensations, and find Racine's '*abstrait, glacé, et diplomatique.*' The criticism of the style of the 'Solitaries' is just, but when Gourmont goes on to assert

> 'L'art est incompatible avec une préoccupation morale ou religieuse ; le beau ne porte ni à la piété, ni à la contrition, et la gloire de Dieu éclate principalement en des ouvrages de la mentalité la plus humble et de la rhétorique a plus médiocre' (p. 48).

he imposes a drastic theoretical limitation which he would hardly tolerate in the concrete study of a poet.[13] This view is confirmed by his asides on the nature and value of artistic experience. When he tries to explain why it is valuable, he falls back on generalities:

> 'L'art est ce qui donne une sensation de beau et de nouveau à la fois, de beau inédit ; on ne peut bien comprendre et cependant être ému.'

Poetry is transformed into a mystery which appears to call not for comprehension, but for adoration. It is a mystery to which only an élite are admitted. '*Car je crois,*' writes Gourmont, '*que l'art est, par essence, absolument inintelligible au peuple.*'

The language that he uses to describe his favourite writers is not less instructive. He speaks enthusiastically of Mallarmé's '*sonnets les plus délicieusement obscurs*' and of '*l'art délicat et ingénieux d'aujourd'hui.*' It is to his credit that he was the indefatigable champion of the 'advanced' writers of his own time, but Mr. Eliot's description of him as 'the critical consciousness of a generation' points to a serious limitation in his criticism. His intense preoccupation with the theories of the Symbolist Movement —a preoccupation that is apparent in his novels and his poetry as well as in his criticism—seems to have turned him into a dilettante who gloried in anything that was recondite and in 'novel' and 'deliciously obscure' sensations partly because they were inaccessible to other people. The terms that he used to describe

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poetic experience suggest that his sensibility was distinctly limited. His admiration for *le beau inédit* impaired his appreciation of Racine and his emphasis on 'the delicate and ingenious art of to-day' accounts, perhaps, for his failure with Rimbaud whom he significantly called '*un crapaud congrument pustuleux*.' For an adequate reading of that poet would have needed a range of feeling of which Gourmont was incapable.

It is one of the disadvantages of Gourmont's sceptical approach that he was more effective as a destructive critic and one of the finest papers in the whole of the *Promenades littéraires* is the brilliant attack on Brunetière. But it is symptomatic that his destructive work was limited to academic writers like Brunetière and the unhappy M. Abalat. His attempt to make poetry something for an élite is a sign of the negative attitude he adopted to one of the most pressing problems of his generation, as it is one of the most pressing problems of our own. He does not escape the charge of being the critic of the Ivory Tower whose aim is to take refuge from the barbarism of the outside world.

I have said that Gourmont was more impressive when making general statements of principle than when elucidating a text. It is not without significance that he wrote better about the work of other critics than about poetry. Although he was the official critic of the Symbolist Movement, he never wrote a searching or substantial book about the *poetry* of the Movement; and compared with his able account of the philosophy of Symbolism in the paper on *Idealism*, his studies of individual writers like Corbière and Laforgue, Verlaine and Mallarmé, are fragmentary and disappointing. For in the last resort he was true to the French approach; he was more interested in the movement of ideas behind the poetry than in the poetry itself. His limitations as a critic sometimes made his discussion of ideas less impressive than it should have been. In his paper on Brunetière he quotes a passage from that critic's book on Balzac:

> 'It is not only not true that everything appears differently to different people according to personal idiosyncracies . . . but reality is the same for all intelligences. There is only one point of view from which it is true and "in conformity with its object," just as in science there is only one formula that is truly scientific.'

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> 'With this principle,' retorts Gourmont, 'one ends by denying the legitimacy of all individual activity. Art disappears altogether . . . Every object, every fact, only permits of one valid representation, which is true; and ideas are necessarily divided into two classes—the true and the false . . .
>
> 'Let us remain true to the principles of subjective idealism which are impregnable. The world is my representation of it. It is the only creative principle, the only one which allows the full development and ordering of intelligence and sensibility.'[14]

As a criticism of Brunetière this is final; as a statement of the philosophy inherent in the poetry of the period, it is undoubtedly true. But Gourmont was so impressed by idealism as a philosophy, so in love with freedom and individualism, that it did not occur to him to ask whether the influence of this philosophy on poetry was as advantageous as he chose to think. It did not strike him that an extreme individualism was actually having an unfortunate influence on language which was losing its ancient power of translating sensations into words and was already showing signs of developing into the *jeu de mots* which we now know as Surrealism; and the sort of criticism which Rivière made in his fine essay, 'Reconnaissance à Dada,' was beyond the scope of his method.

'In order to be a good critic . . . ' wrote Gourmont in a passage already quoted, 'one must possess a strong personality.' It is, I think, the lack of a strong personality, a fundamental weakness of character, which accounts for the 'ill-defined sense of dissatisfaction' we get from his criticism. This is emphasized by a glance at his 'creative' work. Although *Le songe d'une femme* is still kept in the Librarian's Room at the London Library, this curious nineteenth-century novelette no longer strikes us as a particularly sensational performance; but it is an extremely instructive one. The book is, significantly, cast in the form of letters in which the characters recount their *amours* at considerable length. These refined young men with their half-hearted copulation and their passionate interest in underclothing—even the waves on the shore carry us irresistibly back to *dentelles*—represent, I suppose, a perfect example of the attitude to physical love which Lawrence attacked; and it must be a cause for lasting regret that the book never fell under his pen. Behind the remote, rather bookish figure

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in its monkish habit which gives the *Promenades littéraries*, for all their charm, a certain unreality, rises the spectre of a libidinous old man—a passive and almost contemplative spectre which likes to peer and pry into the love affairs of others. ' What,' you ask, ' is the point of this mechanical copulation and these lubricious imaginings?' ' Oh,' it might be replied, ' this is a specialization of sensibility which is unequally developed in every human being and which in my case takes the form of an orgy of amorous fingering.' In fact, the *Songe d'une femme* is a practical illustration of a curious passage in the *Problème du style*, comparing the influence of love and literature. ' It is,' writes Gourmont, ' exactly like the influence of one literature on another. In the same way women (for that matter men too) are rejuvenated by a new love affair and find in a series of almost uninterrupted " passions " the very principle of their vital activity ' (p. 22). The whole of Gourmont is in this passage. He was at some pains to explain in the *Promenades philosophiques* that philosophical idealism and materialism are perfectly compatible, and his work is an ample demonstration of the point. Life and literature were simply a succession of novel sensations which provided the necessary stimulus to enable the human organism to renew its vitality and carry on. There could be no meaning, no coherence in a hedonistic system whose only values were novelty and intensity—values which themselves depended on the assumption that the real is unknowable. Idealism was, at any rate in Gourmont's case, a reaction against an extreme philosophical realism and was certainly born of the fear that once the possibility of a final reality was admitted, life would lose its charm and excitement and become dull. A philosophy which turns life into a despairing game of make-believe seems to me to be a poor thing and it is extraordinary that Gourmont should have countenanced it.

Gourmont was a very stimulating and, up to a point, a very able critic ; but he seems to me to fall short of greatness. He was endowed in a high degree with the Frenchman's mental alertness and his curiosity about life ; but it was precisely an undisciplined curiosity coupled with a fundamental dilettantism which led him into unprofitable ways and detracted from the critical intensity of his work. His scepticism, which was valuable as a critical approach in his time, had in the long run a disabling effect on his writing

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and it is impossible not to be struck over and over again with the fundamental poverty of his outlook.

VI. Conclusion.

It is time to draw some tentative conclusions of a more general nature, to decide how far the French critics of the last century fulfilled the function of criticism. ' The aim of criticism,' said Eliot, ' is the elucidation of works of art and the correction of taste.' The words must be understood in their widest sense. It is not enough for criticism to sharpen our appreciation of a writer's 'style' or to interpret the ' meaning ' of his work ; good criticism must provide the reader with an education, must establish a relation between literature and our ordinary everyday life. It is clear that these aims can only be accomplished if the critic possesses great sensibility and a philosophical outlook or, as Mrs. Leavis once called it, a certain ' wisdom.' The main criticism which has to be made of French writers is that they try to make philosophy do the work of analysis and that they also use it as a substitute for that more general wisdom which we expect of a good critic.

The philosophical training which forms part of French education accounts for the apparent balance and maturity of French critics and the ease with which they handle a technical vocabulary. It stimulates the Frenchman's intellectual alterness and his curiosity about life which are the two greatest virtues of French criticism, and it certainly helps to give it an air of slick professionalism which sometimes makes English criticism look amateurish by comparison. The French mind is better endowed for speculative thought than the English, but it is on the whole less sensitive and less concrete. It is one of the consequences of a training in philosophy that it encourages the Frenchman's natural tendency to abstraction, to manipulate counters like *pensée* and *être moral* which instead of illuminating the work under discussion have precisely the opposite effect ; they take the critic's mind off his text and carry him into a realm of abstract theorising for which the work of art is merely a pretext. The result is that the French critic is more concerned with his own system than with the intrinsic merits of his author, more interested in determining the ' group ' or ' school ' to which he belongs than in the excellence of his poetry.

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A work of art may have important implications in the sphere of morality, but the discovery of these implications pre-supposes the full and unfettered response of the critic to the work before him for which no system of philosophy, whatever its intrinsic excellence, can ever be a substitute. It is tempting to make a theoretic distinction between the two ' moments ' of the critical act—the critic's response to his text and the philosophical analysis of that response, though we may doubt whether in practice there can be complete separation between the two. It remains true, however, that some critics are capable of excellent detailed analysis but are unable to perceive the general implications of the work that they criticize, while others are prevented by the excellence of their philosophical equipment from making that full and unfettered response to the work of art which is the basis of all criticism. This is undoubtedly true of many of the most eminent French critics. It thus happens that though French criticism in the nineteenth century was full of stimulating theories and curious speculations, it suffered from a pronounced defect of sensibility,

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[1]*Curiosités esthétiques* (Ed. Crépet) pp. 192-3.
[2]*L'art romantique* (Ed. Crépet) pp. 95-6.
[3]*Ibid.*, p. 177.
[4]*Curiosités esthétiques*, p. 104.
[5]*Ibid.*, p. 247.
[6]*L'art romantique*, p. 68.
[7]*Ibid.*, p. 80.
[8]*Ibid.*, p. 346.
[9]*L'art romantique*, p. 168.
[10]*Promenades littéraires*, I, p. 14.
[11]As far as I am aware it is not until 1921 that we find an English critic making a similar declaration. In that year, Mr. Middleton Murry wrote in an article called 'A Critical Credo ' (reprinted in *Countries of the Mind, I*): ' The function of criticism is, therefore, primarily the function of literature itself, to provide a means of expression for the critic.'
[12]*Promenades littéraires*, I, pp. 17-8.
[13]He was, in fact, obliged to qualify it on the next page when he made his admirable comment on Bossuet quoted above.
[14]*Promenades littéraires*, III, pp. 32-3.

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and the standard of ' practical criticism ' was, with the exception of Baudelaire, Gourmont and Paul Bourget—a greatly underrated critic whom I have not been able to deal with—extremely low.

It has been suggested that French critics have substituted philosophy for the more general wisdom which is essential to good criticism. It is a notable fact that the French critic attaches more importance to the external order and coherence of his system than to its flexibility or its completeness. The result is that his work often turns out to be inferior to that of English writers whose philosophical equipment appears at first to be less impressive. For this reason it seems to me that men like Sainte-Beuve and Taine are in the last analysis inferior to the representatives of the great humanist tradition in England—to Coleridge and to Arnold.

MARTIN TURNELL.

ESCAPISM IN LITERATURE

WE often hear it said disparagingly that some writer or other is a mere ' escapist,' or that a particular piece of writing is sheer ' escapism.' It is implied that the true function of literature is, not to offer escape from unpleasant facts, but to help the reader to face up to reality, and cope with it successfully. On the other hand we are told by many of those who are interested in the theory of art that the proper function of all art, and therefore of literature, is ' cathartic,' that it should purge the spirit of pent-up forces which cannot express themselves in actual life, that it should afford symbolical fulfilment to our starved needs. Through art these pent-up forces are said to obtain ' release.' Sometimes it is claimed that, by diverting attention from the sordid actuality, art constructs symbols of a deeper reality, more consonant with the spirit's real needs.

What degree of truth is there in these seemingly opposed views? It must, I think, be admitted that there is, indeed, a vice which may appropriately be called ' escapism.' Besides ' release,' literature has another function, which cannot be called release save in a very far-fetched manner. The charge of escapism, I

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shall argue, is justified only when this other function, though ostensibly fulfilled, is as a matter of fact evaded.

In order to defend this opinion I must say briefly what in my view literature is, and what its relation is to the rest of human life. One who is not a literary critic ought perhaps to refrain from discussing this subject, particularly in a literary journal. The expert may be able to show either that my categories are false or that my whole view has been stated long ago, and much more aptly. However, when fools rush in, they may with their mangled remains pave the way for angels.

Literature is the expression of thoughts and feelings in words ; but obviously not all writing is literature in the strict sense. All writing takes effect by affording expression or fulfilment, direct or symbolical, to human needs. Every kind of need, simple or subtle, moral or immoral, may be grist to the mill of literature ; but there is one kind of need, and one kind of satisfaction, which literature must to some extent fulfil. In order to be literature, a piece of writing, I should say, must satisfy the impulse for the clarification and development, and also, of course, the expression, of experience itself. For example, it must afford fulfilment not only to romantic love or the love of nature but also to the need to be more precisely and vividly aware of these experiences. Even if many of the needs which gain expression in writing are unconscious needs, the writing is not literature unless it affords something more than unconscious symbolical fulfilment of those needs. It must also satisfy the need for precise and vivid consciousness of all that is available to conscious inspection. If it can actually extend the frontiers of consciousness into the territory of the unconscious, so much the better.

This need to clarify and develop experience, then, seems to me the essential motive and the essential import of all that is genuine literature. By ' clarification ' I mean the detailed clarification of familiar modes of experience. By ' development ' I mean the development of new and more subtle modes. This distinction though not absolute, is useful. Out of this need for clarification and development of experience springs the need for accuracy or efficiency of expression, and therefore for pregnancy and economy and coherence of expression. Efficiency of expression, though at first instrumental, comes to be valued intrinsically, and

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is, indeed, one of the main sources of literary delight. But to regard literature as solely concerned with efficiency of expression, no matter what experiences are expressed, is surely mistaken. The question as to what *kind* of experince is expressed is not irrelevant. The efficient expression of trivial experiences cannot fully satisfy the essential motive of literature, which is not only the clarification but the development of consciousness. There are then two criteria by which literature is to be judged, but one is primary and entails the other. The primary criterion is the significance of the subject-matter in relation to the demand for the intensifying, clarifying, broadening, deepening, and unifying of experience, and the development of new modes of experience. The other criterion is the efficiency of expression by which this end is pursued. This distinction, however, is to some extent misleading, since the effort for efficiency of expression does not merely convey experience to the reader, but actually creates, in some degree, new capacities for experience in the writer's own mind.

I am assuming that there is a real difference between the relatively superficial and the relatively penetrating kinds of experience, and again between the relatively narrow or dissociated and the relatively comprehensive or integrated kinds. This distinction seems to be implied in nearly all serious literary criticism, and indeed in nearly all educational theory. Also we constantly employ it in our judgments of the calibre of our acquaintances. In my view, it lies at the foundation of a sound social philosophy.

Of course in practice we often violently disagree as to what constitutes the more clarified or the more developed experience or behaviour. But in the abstract, the development of experience seems to involve progress in respect of more penetrating and comprehensive awareness of the self and the world (including other selves), and more appropriate and creative feeling and striving in relation to the character of self and world. This formula, no doubt, is very controversial, particularly in respect of the meaning of 'appropriate.' But both in literature and in our daily practical lives it is assumed that feelings and actions can, in some important sense, be appropriate or inappropriate to objective situations. The essential function of literature, then, is to render experience cognitively more true and affectively and conatively more appropriate.

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One of its subsidiary functions is to afford symbolical satisfaction to extant conscious or unconscious needs which do not obtain adequate satisfaction in actual life. These needs may be of any degree of development, from simple animal functions, such as rest, muscular activity and physical sex, to capacities which emerge only on the distinctively human level, or at the extreme upper reach of human nature. Somewhere in the human category we must include, for instance, capacities for self-conscious and other-conscious personal intercourse, for intellectual comprehension, for æsthetic appreciation, and for a religious 'coming to terms with the universe.' All these needs may demand 'release' in literature.

Since all literature, to be literature at all, must in some manner clarify experience, we may say that all literature must be to some significant extent 'creative.' I say 'significant' because obviously there is a trivial sense in which every fresh statement is 'creative.' It causes *something* to happen in the mind of the reader, and in the mind of the writer himself. In this sense even the extremely familiar proposition $2 + 2 = 4$ is 'creative.' But when Keats said, 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,' he produced something creative in a more significant sense. Even though, as I believe, this famous pronouncement is more false than true, it came, presumably, as something of a revelation to the poet and to his readers. It was a growing point for far-reaching new experiences in men's minds.

For our present purpose we may distinguish between four types of literature. Any particular work is likely to have aspects or passages characteristic of all four types, but it may also be predominantly of one type rather than another. Though all literature is to some extent creative, I shall call the first of these types distinctively 'creative literature.' The others are 'propaganda literature,' 'release literature' and 'escape literature.'

In 'creative literature' the dominant motive and the main import are creative. In the writer's own mind the producing of the work is a creative experience; and in the reader's mind, the reading. 'Release' and propaganda in creative literature may play subsidiary parts, but they are made to serve the essential literary function of clarifying and developing consciousness, of world or self. In so far as this process is cognitive, it will consist

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in an apprehending of fresh aspects of world or self, or of hitherto unnoticed relationships between things remote from one another. Or it may take the form of constructing universes of fiction which symbolize aspects of the actual universe. In so far as it is mainly affective and conative, it will consist in the evoking of new appreciations, and in the creation of new and more developed capacities for action.

' Propaganda literature ' must be distinguished from mere propaganda, in which there is nothing significantly creative. The writer of mere propaganda is concerned simply to popularize facts, ideas, and emotions with which he is familiar. He uses *clichés* and slogans to produce the desired effect on the minds of his public. The cause which he is serving may happen to be good or bad, momentous or trivial. Of course efficient propaganda in a good cause does produce a development of experience in the public, and is therefore in a sense creative. But in the writer himself, it is not an expression of developing experience, and the activity of producing it does not further develop his experience. However well he does his job, he is merely using sound advertizing technique. But in propaganda that is literature the idea to be propagated is still alive and growing in the writer's own mind. It is a creative influence irradiating and transforming his experience. He is dominated by it, possessed by it. It is a growing shoot which ramifies through his mind. And since he has also an aptitude for verbal expression, he is able to communicate to his public not merely certain ideas, dried and salted and conveniently packed, but a potion which may transform their whole attitude to life. In so far as he does his work efficiently, his efficiency is not that of the artvertizer but that of the artist, whether he uses the direct method of exposition and exhortation, as Ruskin did, or the indirect method of fiction, like Dickens. In either case, and whether the message is true or false, the whole texture of his work will be in the strict sense literature, although its dominant motive is not the developing of experience simply for its own sake.

By literature of release, or ' release literature,' I mean literature in which the dominant motive and main import are neither creation nor propaganda but simply the assuagement of starved needs, the release of pent-up forces in the personality. Now ' creative literature ' also affords release to pent-up forces, but it uses these

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' releases ' in such ways as to serve its main purpose of clarifying and developing consciousness. Whereas ' creative literature ' may evoke, and also express and satisfy, new and more developed capacities, pure ' release ' literature does nothing of the sort. It merely assuages familiar needs. In this there is nothing creative. Writing which does no more than afford symbolical satisfaction to extant needs cannot be literature. But there is a kind of writing in which, though the main import is sheer ' release,' the manner in which the release is obtained is one which includes a great deal of genuine, though minor and incidental, creation. Thus there are romances, detective stories, thrillers, poems, *belles lettres*, which, though essentially concerned with ' release,' are written with such originality of perception and expression that they have a really quickening effect.

It may, I think, be truly said that, whereas literature of the predominantly creative type generally tends to undermine or transform the conventional system of ideas and values, ' release literature ' in the main accepts them, tacitly and inadvertently. It is creative only in its detailed illustration of the fashionable ideology. There is one purely 'release' motive, however, which expresses itself in iconoclasm, and dominates a good deal of ' release literature ' in our day. Those who have been seriously irked by authority may develop a need for revolt for its own sake. Those who have suffered under an insincere puritanical morality may crave to deny morality altogether, or to transpose the old ideas of good and evil into their opposites.

A great deal of genuine literature is in the main ' release literature.' And of course an immense amount of writing which is not literature at all is mainly or wholly concerned with ' release.' Even in literature, ' release ' is a quite legitimate function. Incidentally release was probably literature's original office, or the office of that which was later to develop into literature. When wish-fulfilment was sought through magic incantation or bardic stories of the deeds of heroes, the seed of literature was sown. In modern times much poetry (not of the first rank) and many good novels have ' release ' as their main function, witting or unwitting. Rightly we go to literature for symbolical fulfilment of our thwarted capacities, for our craving for adventure, for triumph, for sexual romance, for peace and contemplation, and so on. Literature of

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the lighter sort, which is dominated by ' release ' may be wholesome both for the writer and the reader, provided that it does not purport to be more creative than it is. Purgation is a necessary function. Moreover the incidental and minor creative power of ' release literature ' may benefit a wider public than that which is capable of appreciating literature of a more far-reachingly creative type.

' Escape literature ' is less easy to define. And since it is superficially very like ' release literature,' there may be great difficulty in deciding whether a particular piece of writing is essentially ' release ' or ' escape.' To say that anyone is an ' escapist ' is to charge him with shunning unpleasant reality. Instead of recognizing and grappling with the facts, he either withdraws into some safe corner, where he can live in peace and occupy himself with activities unrelated to the vital struggles of his contemporary world ; or else, unable to find actual escape, he solaces himself by constructing a dream world wherein he can live ' in imagination,' a world after his own heart's desire. ' Escape literature,' then, should be literature the main import of which is to protect the mind from unpleasant reality. This essential notion needs qualifying so as to bring it in line with the central ideas of this essay.

In the first place, ' escape literature,' to be literature at all, must of course be in some way significantly creative. Even if its main import is escape from some intolerable aspect of reality, it must in some respect genuinely clarify experience. It may do this by the detailed texture of its thought and expression. It may do it even through its intention as a whole. For instance, even if it constitutes a symbol falsely claiming to be true of reality, the presentation of the symbol may constitute a genuinely creative experience by opening up vistas of possibility. Further, while all literature is to a greater or lesser extent concerned with ' release,' in ' escape literature ' release is used with the ulterior motive of escape. It is so employed as to make the fictitious world more attractive and more seeming-real.

From one point of view ' escape literature ' is a special kind of ' propaganda literature,' since its main import is to advocate certain ideas and values. There is, however, this difference. In ' propaganda literature ' the motive is conscious, whereas in ' escape literature ' it is mainly unconscious. The escape motive

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is generally an unrecognized fear, which causes an unwitting incapacity to face up to reality. A morbid blindness, a self-protective and perversely creative blindness, not only blots out the obnoxious aspect of reality but also reconstructs the remaining characters into a coherent and lying image. This is the essence of escapism. Even in escape fiction the fantasy, which is in fact a false fantasy, purports to be in some significant manner symbolically true of the real world of men and things.

' Escape literature ' may include a great deal of genuine creation, but its main purport is the reverse of creative. It tends to prevent the development of experience, to prevent the mind from facing up to some unpleasant but important aspect of reality. The creative power of the writer is prostituted for an unnatural end, namely to frustrate creation, to distract attention from the way of development. Thus, quite apart from any question of morality, from the purely literary point of view ' escape literature ' is a debased kind of literature, since it involves a gross limitation of sensibility and an insincere use of creative power. And from the moral point of view ' escape literature ' is bad because it tends to prevent men from facing up to urgent moral problems.

Of the four kinds of literature, or the four kinds of import which any writing may have, I judge ' creation ' (as defined) wholly good, and ' escape ' wholly bad. In the case of propaganda, moral judgment depends on the goodness of the end preached. Even from a literary point of view propaganda for a bad end, however well done, is to be condemned in so far as it involves a restriction of consciousness to prevent the badness of the bad end from being recognized.

' Release,' as we have seen, is harmless or actually desirable. No doubt, to spend a life-time writing ' release literature ' is to deny oneself the greater experiences ; but this is true of any respectable and absorbing work. No doubt the writing of ' release literature ' may be used to distract the mind from duties ; but so may any pursuit. No doubt ' release literature may be handed out to the young or to the populace to divert them from discovering that society is heading for disaster. On the other hand, the more unsatisfactory a society, the more urgent is it that there should be effective means for ' release,' so that harassed individuals may so far as possible preserve their mental health. The con-

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demnation of pure ' release ' is not to be justified except when release becomes an addiction or obsession, so that energy which might be used constructively is frittered away. The fact that such addiction to release does so often occur is no reason to censure release as such. In a society which is ripening for revolutionary change pure ' release ' is apt to be condemned by the revolutionaries, and regarded as escapism, because it distracts attention from social ills, and thus prevents the gathering of pent-up energy for the revolutionary explosion. But for the individual's mental health ' release ' is necessary. And the more exacting a man's life, the more necessary is it that he should have some diversion. Further, the more specialized his work, the more is there in him that needs release. To deny him release is to turn him into a neurotic, a puritan or a fanatic.

So far I have merely discussed in the abstract four possible kinds of import in literature. Is this classification of any practical service? Does it refer to objective characters which literary works actually have? And if so, how are these characters to be detected?

I must leave to literary critics the task of finding out how to assess the creative function of literary works. The fact that the critics so often disagree among themselves does not disturb me. Anything so subtle as the quickening of human minds is bound to be excessively difficult to estimate. To deny that the clarification and development of consciousness is the main function of literature is, in my view, to make nonsense of literary criticism.

The assessing of the ' escape ' element in literature cannot be left wholly to the literary critics. The psychologists and sociologists ought to have something to say about it. I hazard a few remarks. The distressing situation which gives rise to escapist activity may be peculiar to the individual, or it may be something inherent in a group or in society as a whole. The extreme case of individual escapism is neurotic fantasy, such as the delusion of grandeur or of persecution, or the symbolical satisfaction of unconscious cravings for mother-love or for triumph over the father. No doubt neurosis in one form or another has often contributed to the creative power of literature. A hidden conflict may goad the mind into vigorous action. Frustration in actual life may strengthen the life of imagination. In spheres of experience that are not blacked out by the repression, neurosis

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may quicken sensibility and intelligence. And sometimes the result may be great literature ; but only in so far as the main import of the work is *not* neurotic and *not* simply ' escape.'

For there seem to be two possible reactions to trouble in the unconscious. One course is to acquiesce in the repression, to avoid recognizing that *something* or other is amiss, and to allow the hidden conflict to work upon consciousness without criticism, in fact to give rein to fantasy and spin sweet dreams of wish-fulfilment. In literature this results in typical works of ' release ' ; or, if the fantasy purports to be symbolically true of reality, the product is typical ' escape literature.' The other course is to try, however vainly, to probe the self so as to lay bare and solve the hidden conflict, and to see it in its true relation to the rest of the universe. The effort to do this, though it cannot fully succeed in its task, may well produce great creative literature. In ' escape literature,' on the other hand, there is no self-probing, save in safe regions, not inflamed by the hidden conflict ; and no attempt to relate the self's torture to the rest of existence. The resulting work, even if it is executed with literary skill and with a blinkered kind of creative imagination, is in essence merely a protective fiction, falsely purporting to be a true symbol of reality.

The word ' escapism ' generally implies flight not from individual but from social troubles. In particular, those whose political opinions are well to the Left, use it to disparage all writing which might distract attention from the need for social change. I have already noted that much which is thus condemned is merely release literature. But undoubtedly there is a great deal of writing, and some of it is literature, which is indeed escapist in the social sense. The criterion of such writing is that its main import is to persuade the reader and the writer himself that after all there is not much wrong with the existing social order, or that God is backing it, and that certain conventional and outworn ideas and valuations, adequate in an earlier phase of society, are also adequate to-day. It was said above that ' release literature ' tacitly and inadvertently accepts conventional ideas and values. ' Escape literature ' does more than this. It actively asserts them, and at least by implication denies the newer ideas which are appropriate to a changed social situation. I should expect the historian of literature to be able to point to typical ' escape ' works in all the

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periods of far-reaching social and cultural change.

Escapism of the Right is not the only kind of escapism. A great deal of ardent Left Wing writing is itself, I believe, inspired by the need for escape. Of course its import is escape from a very different aspect of reality from that which is shunned by escapism of the Right. It affords cover not from the need for social revolution but from the need for a revolution in the mind of the writer himself. For revolutionary ardour, though it may and often does spring from genuine zeal to found a better world, sometimes has a very different root. There is a familiar psychological principle according to which unconscious guilt and unconscious inferiority may cause a conscious ' projection ' of guilt and inferiority upon some scape-goat. In a good deal of Left Wing writing the discerning critic may find evidence that the author uses the wicked capitalists or the bourgeois class or economic determinism or dialectical materialism as scape-goats to bear the burden of his own sin, or as excuses for his own mental and moral flabbiness. He has in fact constructed, though with an air of ' stark realism,' a fictitious world, which, superficially so like the reality, is false in the same way as the neurotic's delusion is false. It is a dream world. The main import of it is to afford him and his readers a sense that their personal flabbiness and ineffectiveness are the product of forces beyond their control. Whereas for the reactionary escapist true salvation lies in facing the fact that the existing social order and his own part in it are unhealthy and immoral, for the Left escapist it lies in recognizing that his motive for condemning the social order is not as disinterested as he believes. Both are seeking escape from a personal moral challenge ; but whereas in the one case the moral imperative is, ' Do something about the social order,' in the other case it may be metaphorically expressed as, ' Do something about the state of your own soul.'

Left escapism is but a special case of the escapism which characterizes so much of modern 'scientific' culture. Accepting the temper of our age, we tend to withdraw attention from the inner life, and to seek escape from individual moral responsibility by constructing a fictitious world in which individuals are wholly the product of external forces, physical or social.

OLAF STAPLEDON.

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COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

THE CONTINUANCE OF 'SCRUTINY'

The reply to the many flattering inquiries that have been made is that the Editors intend to carry on while it remains possible to do so. Under peace-time conditions *Scrutiny* needed all the support it got. It is now not pessimistic to fear that some rise in costs will prove unavoidable ; so that it would certainly not be possible to carry on with less support than in the past—this being hardly a time when appeals can be made for more.

'THE TURNING PATH'

Mr. R. O. C. Winkler writes: 'Owing to my absence from England when you sent me the proofs of my review of *The Turning Path* two unfortunate misprints appeared in quotations from the poems. In one case, the quotations from *Genesis* should of course read

We retch our hearts out, *teasing* the sublime . . .,

and in the other, from *To a Chinese Girl*, Mr. Bottrall's version has

Fitly proportioned pigments will combine . . . '

CHRISTIAN OR LIBERAL?

THE IDEA OF A CHRISTIAN SOCIETY, by T. S. Eliot Faber and Faber, 5/-).

Addressed to Christians, this book is largely about—and obviously meant to influence—those neutral others who support 'a culture which is mainly negative, but which, so far as it is positive, is still Christian.' Mr. Eliot believes that we must now choose between working for a new Christian culture and accepting a pagan one, whether fascist or communist ; unless we aim at a positively Christian society we are committed 'to a progressive and insidious adaptation to totalitarian worldliness for which the

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pace is already set.' Democracy is not an alternative to totalitarian government; it is fundamentally, though perhaps less forthrightly, just as materialistic and pagan. In intention it merely neglects its Christians and has no coherent system of allegiances to a pagan ideal, but it is none the less developing an increasingly complete network of institutions which invite un-Christian conduct from the Christians who find their everyday life set amongst them.

In pointing out the unsatisfactory features of our society Mr. Eliot can count on wide respect and agreement. In his attack on flabbiness of mind, on the lowering of standards in literature and 'culture' in the narrower sense, on the substitution of a mob led by propaganda in place of a community, and in the sort of concern he shows for education, Mr. Eliot implicitly agrees with much that has been expressed in *Scrutiny* for the last seven years; in his disgust at the financial control of politics and his dismay at the plight of agriculture he is on ground familiarized by social credit reformers and their allies.

In common with many other thinkers, Mr. Eliot believes that any remedy for these disorders must involve the establishment of a true community, one in which non-materialist values will find an important place and not just survive in chinks and crannies. Again, like many other thinkers, he describes these values as 'religious.' The society he wants, therefore, is a 'religious-social community,' and at this point he is implicitly in sympathy with ideas that have been put forward in (for me) unfortunate terms by MacMurray. The new responsiveness to the social interests of man (sensitively expressed in technical psychology by Ian Suttie) is at the present time as obligatory for intellectuals as a concern with psycho-analytic discoveries was in the nineteen-twenties; and it is equally unbalanced; but its temporary currency further extends the range of appeal now possessed by valuable ideas of the kind Mr. Eliot puts forward.

His emphasis is markedly on the communal: 'I have tried,' he writes, 'to restrict my ambition of a Christian society to a social minimum: to picture, not a society of saints, but of ordinary men, of men whose Christianity is communal before being individual.' And his ideal is a community in which social custom is maintained by religious sanction: 'a Christian community is one in which there is a unified religious-social code of behaviour.'

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It is at this point that the non-Christian's doubts begin to focus. Such societies have been known; and stagnation, oppression, and intolerant regimentation have characterized them. Mr. Eliot, it is true, acknowledges from time to time the need for toleration of the non-Christian and, presumably, toleration within limits of those who question the accepted religious-social code of behaviour and its supporting beliefs. But such toleration has not usually marked the effectively Christian societies of the past. Crude and unfashionable as it is—and bad taste though it may seem to the associates of Christian intellectuals—I decline to forget Galileo and his humbler fellow-victims throughout the Christian centuries, or even the attitude of the contemporary Roman Catholic Church to contraceptives. Religious sanction for social custom and customary belief has always produced such things, and there is no good reason to expect a change. 'To the unreasoning mind,' says Mr. Eliot with sedate surprise, 'the Church can often be made to appear to be the enemy of progress and enlightenment.' It may indeed; and count me among the unreasoning.

I cannot doubt that such a society as Mr. Eliot wants would be heavily overbalanced towards conservation and stability, at the cost of plasticity and exploration. I believe that greater plasticity and bolder exploration of human possibilities are more urgently needed. Talk, with which we half frighten and half flatter ourselves, about the hectic speed of the changes which humanity is undergoing in our century is excited blah. Human nature is, as it always was, remarkably stodgy and in crying need of greater plasticity.

People cannot be plastic, however, unless they are relatively free from anxiety and from guilty fear of the possibilities of their own nature; and freedom from anxiety and guilt is not a thing whose possibility Mr. Eliot convincingly believes in. It is true that he says 'We need to recover the sense of religious fear, so that it may be overcome by religious hope,' but the fear very evidently takes first place and goes along with 'the evil which is present in human nature at all times and in all circumstances.'

All alternatives to this spirit seem to be brought under the heading of what Mr. Eliot calls Liberalism, and hates. His attack is made rather chaotic by sketchy suggestions of the relation between this spirit and political and religious liberalism, and by

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the unargued conviction that this general spirit is responsible for all the particular social disorders which disturb him.

But the tags are of little account, and what matters is recognizing the distinction between the 'liberal' spirit and the 'Christian' spirit as Mr. Eliot understands them. As so often happens it can best be expressed in the paradigm which childhood offers. The 'liberal' spirit is the child who explores his world without prejudice and sees no reason to stop exploring; he finds neither the world fundamentally hostile nor himself fundamentally inadequate. The 'Christian' spirit is the child with an intuitive conviction of the world's hostility and his own unworthiness, who (at his best, which Mr. Eliot stands for) concentrates on fortifying himself to overcome—to overcome the world and himself simultaneously. Mr. Eliot's tense and guarded insecurity, beleaguered by the world, is well expressed in his condemnation of 'Liberalism' as 'something which tends to release energy rather than accumulate it, to relax, rather than to fortify.'

The only alternative he sees to Christianity or paganism is a constant departure from, in the sense of a mere rejection of, all positive convictions. This may have been the character of some movements which have been called Liberal. But it is not the only alternative to the religious spirit. What Mr. Eliot ignores or implicitly denies is the possibility of being content with moving on, in a direction given you by the past, to something which has now for the first time become possible and is even more satisfying than your past activities were. This, which is exploration, seems so unsafe to the Christian that he denies its very possibility. His peace of mind depends on the conviction that he knows what he is ultimately aiming at; all his activity must be directed towards a goal which he has already postulated. By this means he escapes the insecurity of being in the strict sense an explorer and becomes instead a pilgrim.

In some temperaments, including apparently Mr. Eliot's, this conviction of an ultimate goal serves paradoxically to reinforce a peculiar gloom. The goal they postulate must be described as unattainable on this earth, since, of course, it is in the nature of human activity that each new development reveals a new and unattained possibility. Simultaneously with becoming better than we were we realize that we could be better than we are. To the

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explorer this seems an unsurprising and undisturbing fact. But by concentrating on their postulated goal, those of Mr. Eliot's spirit can see our every advance almost exclusively in the guise of a relative failure. Observe where the emphasis falls in the following passage: 'But we have to remember that the Kingdom of Christ on earth will never be realized, and also that it is always being realized; we must remember that whatever reform or revolution we carry out, the result will always be a sordid travesty of what human society should be—though the world is never left wholly without glory.' The satisfaction of advancing at all is recognized dimly; the satisfaction of seeing that further advance is possible is converted into a disappointment. What is vividly felt is 'the evil which is present in human nature at all times and in all circumstances.' It is this which turns the explorer into an anxious pilgrim.

D.W.H.

TWENTIETH-CENTURY MUSIC-MAKING

MUSIC IN THE MODERN WORLD, by Rollo H. Myers (*Arnold, 6/-*).

Mr. Myers begins his study by discussing the difficulties involved in all writing about music and explains why music is, to use Roussel's phrase, the 'most hermetic' of the arts. He then proceeds, in chapters on Music and Society and Music and Nationality, to give an excellent account of the changes which came over accepted attitudes to music during the nineteenth century and of the reasons for these changes, leading to a description of the transition from 'patriotic' nationalism to individualism, and of the difference, as 'functional' music, between Gebrauchmusik and, say, a cantata of Bach. The question of the *trahison des clercs* and the relation between music and propaganda are illuminated by some snappy quotations from official documents, particularly one about the notorious case of *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, and there is an acute passage which, after pointing out the distinction between thematic and stylistic nationalism, places Wagner as the precursor of National Socialism, his Siegfried the Aryan, 'prototype of Germanic youth and the forger of the steel with which Germany is to carve herself a place in the sun.'

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The chapter on Music and Humanity distinguishes the physiological from the psychological effect of music and hence approaches the problem of Music and Morality and, more specifically, of musical education both in the wide and in the narrow sense. 'Music and the Listener' considers the question of *how* to listen to music and balances the pros and cons of 'the appalling popularity of music' as a force influencing intelligent listening. 'Music and the Interpreter' deals with the evil of the 'film-star' virtuoso (particularly the conductor), and points out that before the nineteenth century music was not divided into specialized departments; virtuoso and composer were usually inseparable so that one could be interested in the virtuosity while still being interested in the music. (Mr. Myers doesn't mention, however, the important exception of the eighteenth-century *castrati*). This leads into an examination of the relation between music and entertainment in the modern world, with special reference to the sinister appearance of the word 'highbrow,' followed by a consideration of the rival claims of opera and ballet which summarizes fairly the prevailing attitudes of twentieth-century composers towards these forms. ('Both forms are very largely governed by theatrical convention, but ballet shows less desire to compromise with real life than opera, and is therefore, I would say, a purer form of art. Ballet moves in a stylized world of its own, but the operatic convention does not exclude a degree of naturalism which may be ludicrous and is always irksome.'). The book concludes with a brief summary of the trends of contemporary composition and with some speculations about the future.

Mr. Myers's case about the position of music in the modern world will not be new to readers of this periodical; but it is time the case was stated explicitly with reference to music and Mr. Myers states it with a lucidity that makes the greater part (at least) of his book quite distinct from the usual run of writing about music and a serious, if not specifically original, contribution to musical history. The early chapters are all admirable, though occasionally Mr. Myers's phraseology seems to me a little unfortunate. I have, for instance, already explained in these pages[1] that I believe it is misleading to suggest that the emotions aroused by music are '*sui*

[1] *Cf.* 'The Textual Criticism of Music,' *Scrutiny*, March, 1939.

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generis and essentially in a different category from those aroused by the other arts ' ; it is rather a question of the *degree* of the purity (or non-realism) of the convention ; and to a certain extent all music is, or should be, ' determined by natural laws.' Again, while I agree that some sort of musical education along the lines advocated by Mr. Myers is urgently necessary :

> ' . . . much still remains to be done before the last barriers, which seem to rail off music from the other intellectual activities in which young people in this country are expected to take an interest, have been swept away. When that day comes, music will be practised by every man and woman as a matter of course, and the string quartet may even take the place of bridge as a social pastime. The important thing is that music should not be taught as an " extra " in schools but should form part of the normal curriculum. Moreover, at least equal importance should be attached to the history of music, in outline at any rate, and to rudimentary theory, as to the actual playing of an instrument . . . Music, in fact, should be taught as a living subject, and as one of the great departments of knowledge, not as a mere affair of scales and five-finger exercises on the piano or violin,'

I'm afraid it is too rosily utopian to expect such measures to generate a race of string quartet players. In the first place I think it would be difficult, in the present state of musical education, to find teachers capable of propagating a true musical culture, and in the second place such education—though I repeat it is vitally necessary—could never be more than a substitute for the active, participating, traditional education which, to call upon the stock example, was available to the Elizabethans. Further, although I applaud Mr. Myers's wisdom in refusing to dogmatize as to which kind of listening is the ' right ' one, I think he understates the case when he merely says that those who listen to music in the day-dreamer's, the mood-seeker's, or the picture- or story-maker's way are not getting as complete a musical experience as those who ' are able to follow music critically and with some appreciation of the technical and other problems involved,' since technique isn't, surely, the question ; the point is that unless one listens to music as music one inevitably responds only to some superficial

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and perhaps even fortuitous corruscation of the total experience. One may get ' pleasure ' from it, but it is only a pleasure analogous to getting drunk or walking in the rain.

But I do not believe Mr. Myers really disagrees with me on these matters ; I merely think they might have been more clearly expressed. What I find more difficult to understand is how Mr. Myers, after giving an able account of French light music and *opéra bouffe* as exemplified in Offenbach and Chabrier and after making an extremely intelligent plea for a return, in *opéra bouffe*, to the tradition of vocal lyricism (rather than the rhythms of the dance), can evoke the work of Eric Coates and Armstrong Gibbs as the nearest approach to good entertainment music produced in this country. If one wanted an example of the process of ' levelling down ' so properly deplored by Mr. Myers one surely couldn't find a better (or worse) one than the popular (and—heaven save us!—professional) acceptance as art *or* entertainment of the dreary manufactured inanities, presumably intended for the delectation of a public of intellectual morons, of the Eric Coates of our music-producing age ; besides, the remark is unfair to Dr. Gibbs who is quite a charming composer and one who can hardly, anyway, be called popular in the Little-by-Little sense at all.

This comment on Coates is disturbing and perhaps unfairly intensifies what seems like a certain glibness in the two chapters dealing with the development of contemporary music. At least these chapters are perfunctory and seem out of place in a book designed for those seriously interested in modern musical activities: I am particularly surprised at Mr. Myers's acceptance of the pigeon-hole method of dealing with composers. For example, in an enthusiastic note on Rubbra Mr. Myers refers to him as a ' neo-romantic.' At first I thought neo-romantic must just mean any modern composer who wasn't neo-classic, because everyone knows that if one isn't Classical one must be Romantic and one can't very well help being Neo anyway. Then I thought that since this meaning didn't seem to mean much at all and since neo-classical seems to apply to composers who neo-ize the conventions of the eighteenth century, perhaps neo-romantic might apply to composers who neo-ize the conventions of the nineteenth-century romantics ; in which case, about Rubbra, it just isn't true. (One doesn't seem to hear of Neo-Polyphonic-Period composers). The

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fact that I don't always share the same enthusiasms and dislikes as Mr. Myers—that I'm surprised he finds Ravel an ' intellectual ' composer, that I don't agree a bit with his estimate of Bliss and that I believe his lack of sympathy for the pince-nez and Santa Claus whiskers of the Teutonic tradition makes it difficult for him to be fair to Mahler—is of course only a minor matter. But it still seems to me that the pigeon-hole business is not so minor, that it is often dangerous and always unhelpful.

I don't want to cross swords again with Mr. Myers over Stravinsky ; but though I agree with much of what he says, particularly about Stravinsky's detachment from personal things, I still don't see that because of these qualities Stravinsky is a great composer. Mr. Myers makes a very instructive comparison with Mallarmé (' Ce n'est pas avec des idées qu'on fait des vers mais avec des mots '), and it seems to me probable that Stravinsky's position in musical history is not unlike that of Mallarmé in the history of literature. He was necessary, he re-established respect for the materials of his art, but it is false to pretend that there is no alternative to complete forgetfulness and indifference of self in the actual musical material other than ' a glorified reflection of one's own misfortunes ' ; there is between the two the mean of the kind of objectivity—combining the maximum of personality with the maximum of impersonality—which we find in the greatest Bach Choral Preludes or in the Mozart G minor Quintet. We could all add our own examples, and it would not be a tiny list.

Even in these two perfunctory chapters there are, of course, good passages. The section on Stravinsky is good in its way, and so is the section about the atonalists, though I believe it is over-simple. It is only a half-truth to say that atonalism is the negation of tonality and that it has no historical precedent: it is a further intensification of the expressionistic desire to incarnate the ' psychological moment,' a logical development out of chromaticism, particularly the chromaticism of *Parsifal* and *Tristan*. The trouble is that chromaticism itself is, and always has been (*cf.* Gesualdo) essentially a process of disruption, and in order to systematize it an intellectually abstract theory is inevitable, a kind of musical geometry which is out of proportion to, and in perpetual conflict with, the simplest acoustical laws to which the

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human voice and the human ear alike interdependently respond, and on which the fundamental principles of melodic lyrical construction are thus necessarily founded. The system is one thing, and it is only a means to an end. The music is another, and it is evidence of the fallacy of the system that the greatest works in it. such as Berg's *Lyric Suite* and Schönberg's *Orchestral Variations* are those that are least dependent on the geometrical rules. Any true musical convention exists of course only in the works that create it ; but it is no accident that the twelve-tone system is the first to claim for itself scientific rather than empirical validity.

The twelve-tone technique is really of enormous importance in any examination of the relation between music and the modern world, and I don't think that Mr. Myers quite brings home the centrality of its position. For not only has it produced some fine music which is the twilight of the expressionistic era but it has polished the battlements of the Ivory Tower so assiduously that the peering eyes of ordinary men and women (if they *should* peer) are dazzled by the transcendental glare ; and it is moreover claimed that to peer is presumptuous, that the outsider just hasn't the right. This doesn't apply so much to Berg who is usually admitted to be the greatest of the atonalists and who, significantly, has to some extent come to terms with his audience ; and it is probably justified in the case of Schönberg and Webern. But for some of the others who haven't quite so much confidence in their unique genius it must be awfully soothing to be able to hold to the twelve-tone commandments with such passionate conviction. The separation of the artist from society could not be carried further ; it is hardly surprising that there should to-day be a reactionary tendency towards a new kind of musical functionalism ; not of course anything like the self-styled Hindemythic Utility Music that nobody in actual fact finds any more useful than the expressionistic wallowings and lucubrations of the duodecuple moron, but music which models, rather than is modelled by, radio, cinema, theatre, various mechanical means of reproduction, even Science.

The future which Mr. Myers foresees for music is not an attractive one. I think it may be true, mainly for economic reasons, that music ' will probably oscillate between great abstraction (absolute music) and complete subservience to extra-musical considerations, just as science in recent years has oscillated between

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pure theory and the application of discoveries to practical ends.' And although I don't regard this as an ideal state of affairs I like it better than if the resources of the scientist were to be exploited wholesale by the 'serious' composer, since nothing is more necessary for the health of music to-day than a drastic reduction, rather than an increase, of the resources available to the composer. We must remember, too, this: that whereas we look at each other at very close range, admiring this whimsical smile or deploring that ill-carried bowler, the Future must inevitably take a longer view. The Future will not notice Prince Igor's brand new Ism, or at least will not recognize it as such, and it will turn a deaf ear to the Emperor Darius's most modish micro- or poly-tonality. The Future will not observe the latest shift from or to Expression, it will merely hear the music of those few composers who really have something to express. It may be that the drift of civilization, if it does drift, will make it increasingly difficult for these composers to gain a hearing, but I do not think that the creative spirit in those who honestly have a will to create, can be utterly stifled. If it can, then the resources of science as applied to music, won't matter anyway, they will cease to be a nuisance, will become merely of no account. If that day comes Mr. Myers's book will be a no-account too; and perhaps the fact that one reviews it now shows that one hasn't yet relinquished all hope of a more creative human solidarity. But it isn't a hope that governments are likely to include in their War Aims.

W. H. MELLERS.

PHILOSOPHY AT OXFORD

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY, by R. G. Collingwood (Oxford University Press, 7/6).

Professor Collingwood's autobiography is in part the attempt of a university teacher of philosophy to say what he thinks his job is, and a criticism of many of his colleagues for their conception of that job. It is also the work of a man who believes he has made an important contribution to philosophy. This belief I shall not discuss, but certain allied characteristics of the book should be mentioned for the light they throw on the author. A few quotations will illustrate what I mean.

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' For the first time I tasted the pleasure of doing administrative work, and learnt once for all how to do it ' (p. 7). ' If anybody chooses to deny this, I will not try to convince him ' (p. 70). ' I will not be drawn into discussion of what I write. Some readers may wish to convince me that it is all nonsense. I know how they would do it; I could invent their criticisms for myself ' (p. 118). 'Arguments of this kind were no longer even worth refuting, once I knew that " realism " was completely astray as to the nature of history ' (p. 148).

The tone illustrated in these quotations, while it adds to the value of the book as self-portraiture, makes it less valuable as a discussion of problems in the teaching of philosophy. For such a discussion the above-the-battle attitude is not the most helpful. Moreover the solemnity of Collingwood's references to his relations with his colleagues betrays him as seeing himself in the role of rebel against academic tradition—the rebellion being of the kind that depends on the persistence of the thing rebelled against. ' I do not apologize for having felt, when young, the diffidence of youth. At forty, I should not have hesitated for a moment, if I had been attached to a school of thought whose leaders I had convicted of errors so gross on matters of fact so important, to break the attachment ' (p. 22).

For those who have less desire to strike attitudes against a tastefully arranged academic background, the question raised by Collingwood's strictures on the Oxford realists is a more pedestrian one. It is one of evidence, documentation, precision of statement. To treat the last point in detail would lead into excessive technicality, but one reply can be made fairly simply. Oxford realist philosophy is accused of corrupting the idealist tradition of Green and his school in various ways which can be summed up in the phrase ' divorcing philosophy from life.' The realist is represented as saying to his pupils: ' Remember the great principle of realism, that nothing is affected by being known. That is as true of human action as of anything else Moral philosophy is only the theory of moral action: it can't therefore make any difference to the practice of moral action ' (p. 48). The sophism is plain. That true thinking about moral action is *qua* thinking distinct from and without influence on what it is about seems to me not ' realist dogma ' but obvious truth. But the view that Collingwood foists

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on the realists is that the whole activity involved in 'being a moral philosopher' is or ought to be wholly without influence on conduct—which neither follows, nor so far as I know has been thought by any realist to follow, from a realist theory of knowledge. Collingwood must then, appeal, as he proceeds to do, to the actual practice of realist philosophers. 'The pupils,' he says, 'whether or not they expected a philosophy that should give them, as that of Green's school had given their fathers, ideals to live for and principles to live by, did not get it; and were told that no philosopher (except of course a bogus philosopher) would even try to give it. The inference which any pupil could draw for himself was that for guidance in the problems of life, since one must not seek it from thinkers or from thinking, from ideas or from principles, one must look to people who were not thinkers (but fools), to processes that were not thinking (but passion), to aims that were not ideals (but caprices), and to rules that were not principles (but expediency)' (p. 48).

Disproof of such a charge is obviously difficult. But as Collingwood offers no documentation at all (except in so far as the last chapter, on the decline of political thinking and morality in the present century and especially under the present government, counts as such), even a few scattered references that tell in the opposite direction may be of some use. The effect of the realists on their pupils was, according to Collingwood, 'to convince them that philosophy was a silly and trifling game, and to give them a lifelong contempt for the subject' (p. 50). It is true that the reference is primarily to the second generation of realists, and Collingwood himself admits that Cook Wilson, that great figure of the elder generation, was an inspiring teacher (p. 19). But the relation between Cook Wilson and the school of Green (to which Nettleship belonged) is worth driving home in view of Collingwood's representation of it. In his memoir of Cook Wilson, Farquharson says of him: 'Destructive his dialectic was, too polemical perhaps, yet positive and bracing by contrast with those cold negative currents which filled the air; the irony, say, of Arnold or of Nettleship' (*Statement and Inference*, pp. 15-16). And again (p. 883), 'Wilson had a moral repugnance to scepticism in any form.' This is not conclusive. Cook Wilson would not have been the first, if Collingwood were right, to be the unconscious fore-

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runner of all he most hated. But it seems clear that in respect of moral earnestness (*not* preaching) Cook Wilson (and I should say his successors) had the advantage, if not of Green (an altogether exceptional figure) at least of such men as Nettleship. And as to the effect of the actual philosophy taught it is enough to refer to Farnell's amusing memoirs, *An Oxonian Looks Back*, where he refers to the 'gift of diffusing darkness' and the 'faculty of "slinging ink"' he acquired under Green's influence. No doubt Farnell was a commonplace mind, and no philosopher. But it is the influence of the different schools on the average pupil that Collingwood is talking about. Similarly, I have heard of a non-philosophical Greats student of the nineteen-hundreds who recently remarked of a distinguished realist that he couldn't be a real philosopher—he only talked common sense.

It is true than an Oxford realist training tends to cause an almost morbid distrust of systematizing in philosophy, and a dislike for jargon that makes certain theories seem nonsensical merely because they are not stateable in terms immediately and transparently intelligible to a mind disciplined to find anything unintelligible that it possibly can. (The point is discussed from a much more anti-realist viewpoint by Mr. Crossman in an able review of Collingwood's book in the *New Statesman* of August 5th). But it is a far cry from this to turning into the 'potential dupes of every adventurer in morals or politics' that Collingwood represents the pupils of a realist training as being.[1]

Collingwood's own conception of the teaching of philosophy as based on 'showing pupils how to read a philosophical text' (p. 74) is interesting and probably fruitful. His charges against Oxford realism of Anti-historicism and weakness in exegesis are largely justified, and his own preference, though it is grounded on his own peculiar view of philosophy, can be defended on more general grounds: that if the history of philosophy is to be studied at all—and there are few who would claim a greater chance of success by starting from scratch and just meditating on the great problems—it ought to be studied historically. If a philosopher is worth studying, one is likely to get more out of him, from a strictly

[1]And evidence like Farnell's suggests that the destructive work of the 'realists' was called for.

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philosophical point of view, by following his thoughts as a whole, than by using isolated portions of his work as pegs on which to hang our own reflections—in Collingwood's words 'trotting out some philosophical question of which the passage vaguely reminds him' (p. 71). (The phrase just quoted has a slightly different bearing in its context.)

The merit and faults of Oxford realist philosophy is perhaps a subject of rather parochial interest. A more general criticism of Collingwood's discussion would be based on its extraordinary neglect of sociological conditions. The thesis that all history is the history of thought, propounded in some admirable pages on historical methodology, may pass muster through its indefiniteness, but when it comes to the concrete application that 'the minute philosophers of my youth . . . were the propagandists of a coming Fascism' it is clear that something is wrong. (For Collingwood is not speaking from the standpoint of a materialistic determinism). In part the defect is a personal one—Collingwood must be in the centre of the stage, therefore his enemies must be cast for the role of principal villains. But there is a deeper defect, of which his contempt for psychology is symptomatic. No doubt it is right to reject the claim of psychology to be a 'science of mind' (p. 94). But Collingwood seems to talk as if our actions were wholly ours as rational beings, as if psychology in being the study of 'such functions as sensation and appetite' were something less than the study of *ourselves* as sentient and appetitive, as if history as the history of thought were merely opposed to and not also based on a genuinely human psychology and sociology. Whether he means to say all this I do not know. But a reading of his philosophy of history raises doubts which are confirmed by the particular applications (*e.g.*, p. 112). In fact, Mr. Crossman's description of Collingwood's philosophy of history as his Ivory Tower is not without point.

It only remains to commend some of the outstanding merits of the book, notably the treatment of political philosophy on pp. 61 ff., the treatment of history as affording training in insight as distinct from the formulation of rules (p. 101), and the description of the *Daily Mail* as 'the first English newspaper for which the word "news" lost its old meaning of facts which a reader ought to know if he was to vote intelligently, and acquired

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the new meaning of facts, or fictions, which it might amuse him to read' (p. 155). For such things, and for the essay in historical method given in the chapter on Roman Britain, the book is well worth reading.

J. G. MAXWELL.

POETRY IN FRANCE

INTRODUCTION A LA POÉSIE FRANCAISE, by Thierry Maulnier (Gallimard, 30 fr.).

M. Maulnier's title raises expectations which are not altogether fulfilled by the book. It is difficult not to feel that its utility has been seriously impaired by an unfortunate choice of method. The book consists of an essay of over a hundred pages on French poetry followed by two hundred pages of selections from French poets which are intended to illustrate his thesis. There is necessarily a gap between M. Maulnier's criticism and his illustrations and the work as a whole tends to be too abstract and general to be a satisfactory 'Introduction.' It is M. Maulnier's own fault if the reader is left wondering whether his critical apparatus is sufficiently good for the job.

The essay is a very unequal performance. It contains some suggestive pages, but much of what M. Maulnier has to say has already been said better and far more concisely by other French critics. At the beginning of the essay he says:

> 'Une véritable introduction à la poésie française est une introduction à la ressemblance des particularités de chaque poète français.'

This is well said, but it is disconcerting to be told in the next sentence that:

> 'L'entreprise de ramener Villon et Nerval, Mallarmé et Racine à je ne sais quelle somme de caractères communs qui les définiraient comme poètes français n'aurait très exactement aucun sens.'

In spite of the tell tale 'je ne sais quelle somme,' we may well wonder why not. The work has been done for English poetry, and there seems to be no reason why it should not be done for French poetry.

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The first section of the essay deals with poetry in general, and M. Maulnier plunges at once into a series of wordy generalizations which are familiar to readers of his book on Racine. These are specimens of the highflown style that he affects:

> ' Elle (la poésie) est l'incroyable étincelle qui réunit les atomes même du miracle aux atomes de l'extrême nécessité.'
>
> ' On peut définir au contraire la poésie comme une raison supérieure, à laquelle la raison commune ne suffit pas.'

This sort of statement is carefully punctuated at discreet intervals by such phrases as ' *Heidegger dit* ' and ' *Si l'on admet avec Vinci.*'

The third section of the essay, which deals specifically with French poetry, is more satisfactory. M. Maulnier's aim is to rehabilitate the sixteenth century at the expense of the nineteenth. There are some good pages on Villon and a stimulating discussion of a number of writers whose work is not well known in this country—Scève, Louise Labé, d'Aubigné and Garnier—but after studying the selections in the second part of the book, some readers may feel that M. Maulnier has spoilt the effect of his criticism by exaggeration. He writes, for example:

> ' Jamais époque n'a éte plus riche en poètes du premier rang, jamais les grandes œuvres n'ont été produites en telle profusion, avec tant de générosité, d'abondance créatrice et de joie . . . Scève, Ronsard, Du Bellay, d'Aubigné, Garnier, voguent à pleines voiles dans l'espace enchanté où Baudelaire et Rimbaud ne s'élancent à chaque fois que pour deux ou trois coups d'aile de l'essor condamné d'Icare.'

Some of the writers he mentions, particularly Garnier, were fine poets, but to describe them all sweepingly as ' poets of the first rank ' seems an overstatement. Their vitality was magnificent, but there was also a note of immaturity in their outlook. M. Maulnier describes Garnier as a ' French Elizabethan,' but is apparently unaware of the reservations that the description implies.

It is refreshing to find M. Maulnier dealing firmly with Hugo and Musset in a passage which deserves quotation:

> ' La place de Lamartine, de Hugo, de Vigny, de Musset dans l'histoire de la poésie française ne tardera pas, il faut l'espérer,

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à apparaître ce qu'elle fut réellement, c'est-a-dire extrêmement mince . . . Ils bornèrent leur révolution à quelques innovations d'ordre formel, d'ailleurs extrêmement timides. Enfin, ils manquèrent surtout de génie poétique, et c'est par imposture, distraction ou malentendu, qu'ils sont restés, dans l'histoire de la littérature française les types de l'abondance et de la richesse lyrique.'

There are some sensible pages on surrealism, but M. Maulnier—perhaps because of his predilection for the ' vigorous,' ' sensual ' poetry of the Renaissance—seems to me to do less than justice to Baudelaire and Rimbaud. Nor is it easy to share his view that the twentieth century is developing into one of the great periods of French poetry.

In an 'Avertissement ' which precedes the selections, M. Maulnier declares that his aim is to define ' par les textes même la ligne des hauteurs dominantes de l'histoire poétique française.' The intention is admirable, but the writer appears over-anxious to forestall criticism by adding that he has not tried to produce a new anthology and that while some poems are too well-known for inclusion, others which are nearly as well-known have necessarily been included to illustrate his thesis. This method of selection leads to some curious results.

M. Maulnier devotes nearly half his space to the sixteenth century and this part of the book is the most interesting. With this exception, however, the virtues of the collection are mainly negative. There is only a page or two of Hugo and Musset and nothing from the Parnassians. There are also some strange omissions. There is not a line of Molière whom many French critics consider the most complete representative of the French genius. There is no Verlaine whom M. Maulnier dismisses in his preface as the author of a handful of ' pleasant ' poems. It would have been worth including some of Verlaine's best poems if only to illustrate his relation to the lyric poets of the middle ages and the fate of this tradition towards the close of the nineteenth century. We must hope that Corbière and Laforgue are included among ' certain poets whose absence does not in any way imply a judgment on the poetic quality of their work,' for neither will be found in M. Maulnier's pages.

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The selections from the poets who are included are often somewhat arbitrary. Corneille is represented by a short passage from his comedy, *Clitandre*, a couple of religious poems and ten pages of extracts from his last play, *Suréna*, which seems to me to have been over-praised by contemporary admirers and can hardly be regarded as typical of Corneille's best manner. It might have passed in an anthology, but not in a selection designed to illustrate the special characteristics of French poetry. Racine does not fare much better. One is glad to have the great speech from *Phèdre*, Act IV, Sc. 1 (' O douleur non encore éprouvée '), but the other passages are more doubtful. There is a well-thumbed passage from *Bérénice* (' Je vois que votre coeur m'applaudit en secret ')—a play which has long been considered to be inferior to Racine's best work—and some pointless snippets from *Mithridate*, *Iphigénie* and *Athalie*. Many of us would willingly have exchanged some of them for Phèdre's confession in Act I, Sc. 3 (' Mon mal vient de plus loin '), Agrippine's speech in *Britannicus* Act IV, Sc. 2, which is a splendid example of the texture of the great *tirades*, and the dream scene from *Athalie*. M. Maulnier no doubt considered that these belong to the parts of Racine which every French schoolboy is reputed to know by heart ; but it could be replied that this after all is an introduction and that in any case poems are included which are almost as well-known to English as to French readers. For example, Villon's ' La Belle Heaumière ' is there ; it is an admirable illustration of some of the peculiar virtues of French poetry and one would have been glad to have it if it had not been so miserably truncated and so clumsily expurgated that it loses most of its point. Two of Mallarmé's best known poems, *Brise Marine* and *The Swan* are there and so is the *Bateau Ivre* (carefully shorn of what M. Maulnier considers its weaker lines), which makes his claim that he is not producing one more anthology sound thin. The other selections from Baudelaire and Rimbaud seem the more arbitrary in view of the author's statement that (apart from the *Correspondances* and *Voyelles* which are ' too often quoted ' for him to include) he has given us the best of both poets.

One's final impression is that a satisfactory ' Introduction ' could only take the form of a full-length critical study illustrated by detailed analysis of representative passages. In such a study, the fact that the passages discussed were ' well-known ' would be

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no objection if a competent critic used them as a means of educating the reader's taste. M. Maulnier's mixture of criticism and anthology creates insurmountable difficulties and to an English reader at any rate smacks too much of ' book-making.'

M.T.

ROGER FRY AND ART CRITICISM

LAST LECTURES, by Roger Fry (*C.U.P., 21/-*).

To decide how a picture affects us and why the effect of one picture may be better for us than that of another is generally agreed to be more difficult than the parallel problems of literary criticism. One has no unit to start from corresponding to the *word*. While it might be possible to begin a critique of a picture by Cézanne or even Gainsborough from a consideration of their brush strokes, one could not attempt this profitably with the work of Ingres or Leonardo or any fifteenth-century Italian. One must take larger units, line, colour, mass, etc. The European picture is generally admitted to contain a harmonious organization of such elements embodied in natural objects, but the great question of this century has been whether the perception of this sensuous harmony should evoke an emotional harmony or whether we should respond merely on the sensuous plane to the relationship of certain forms, but not to the forms themselves. Which of these is the æsthetic response? Roger Fry supported the first of these propositions in early life and the second later, but he never believed that it might be possible to isolate a specifically ' æsthetic ' emotion ; his theory remained, as he himself said, ' a purely practical one, a tentative expedient, an attempt to reduce to some kind of order (his) æsthetic impressions up to date.'

Fry's empiricism constitutes his great merit as a critic. He was interested first of all in the concrete, in anlysing his feelings before actual works, and he sought all his life for an adequate general method which would render comparison and evaluation possible. Frequent inconsistency is a price well worth paying for such magnificent disinterestedness, such catholicity of taste and such a power of illuminating analysis. The book on Cézanne is perhaps the most impressive product of his scrupulousness, which

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here prevented him from going beyond delicate descriptions of technique simply because he was uncertain of the next step. The essay, *Some Questions of Esthetics*, in *Transformations*, is, I think, his least convincing long essay, because he felt bound, for controversial purposes, to be comprehensive and dogmatic, the resultant postulate of an ideal purely plastic work of art being unhelpful in practice and the descriptions of the literary or representational elements in certain pictures discussed being distinctly tendentious. Needless to say, Fry did primarily see the plastic aspects of works of art, but his awareness of and interest in other aspects, though a loss to consistency, is undoubtedly a gain from every other point of view. This dislike and avoidance of fixed methods of analysis reminds one that Fry was equally chary of objective standards of judgment. *In Art-History as an Academic Study*, which begins the book under review, he wanders round the problem for some time before suggesting that we may compare the effects which various works have on us, ' and thus perhaps we may build up a rough working hypothesis of an order of relative values. Although even then we shall gain far more by noting the specific qualities of different experiences and distinguishing them clearly from one another than we can gain by placing them in order of merit ' (p. 17). Ultimately no one could claim that any critic's standards were more than ' a working hypothesis,' but these would seem to become more objective in proportion to the discriminating catholicity of his taste. Fry had no need to be so modest.

Last Lectures contains Fry's final opinions about the art of Egypt, Mesopotamia, Africa, pre-Spanish America, China, India and Greece, with special reference to the qualities of Sensibility and Vitality on which he bases his comparisons, together with a reasoned and highly reasonable plea for a school of art-history in Cambridge which should also be a school of taste ; he was fortunate not to see the more recent architecture, academic and municipal, in both the older universities. The use of photographs of original works, which would be necessary throughout a great part of any conceivable course organized away from London, would raise innumerable small problems of critical tact and adjustment. No doubt Fry had considered this problem, though it is surprising that he several times comments on both painting and sculpture, notably

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in the Chinese and Indian sections of the book, of which he had not himself seen the originals. His approach in all the lectures is more that of the *Essay in Aesthetics* in *Vision and Design*, than that of the essay in *Transformations* just referred to. Though he lays great stress on the quality of Sensibility, or subtly varied rhythm, in all the plastic elements of a picture or statue, his separate analyses suggest that he was moving away from his most austere viewpoint to what one can only call, even at the risk of appearing cheaply patronising, a more comprehensive appreciation. One finds the new interest most satisfactorily expressed when he deals with animal sculpture, for example in the following:

> ' . . . The ape of King Narmer. No doubt this is a marvellous piece of realistic observation, but it is far more than that ; it has the special quality of vitality, of expressing the inner life of the beast . . . And the treatment is sensitive throughout ; the artist has seized the main plastic relations with extraordinary grip—look at the bony structure of the eye orbit and the bony prominence of the nose—and he has felt the transitions from one plane to another with extreme sensitiveness and stated them with a reticence and subtlety which show how certain he was, how little he felt the need to exaggerate or underline. Moreover he has refused to add any picturesque details either to convince one of the reality of his image or as an excuse for display.' (p. 55).
>
> ' Here we have an imitative intuitive understanding of animal life, a marvellous grasp of the essential character expressed in forms of the utmost simplicity so that the plastic sequence is instantly grasped. What makes this so remarkable is the degree to which the observation of nature has been pushed without ever becoming merely dscriptive and external. Everything has been assimilated and as it were digested into terms of an inevitable and coherent plastic harmony. Nothing in the natural object has been accepted as merely given ; all has passed through the transmuting power of a creative mind.' (p. 118. A description of one of the gilt bronze bears shown at the Chinese Exhibition).

In describing representations of human beings Fry seems less sure

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of his method and of exactly what he is trying to describe. In the following note on a head of Akhenaten by Thutmosis he relates plasticity to representational effect fairly closely:

> 'Here at least is intense vitality—forms that betray the inner life. And we get a sensibility in the surface modelling of incredible delicacy and finesse and yet the rhythmic harmony is all-pervading and unbroken.' (p. 60).

and in his descriptions of Negro spirit heads he is usually successful, for example:

> 'In this Negro head the artist has seized on the dome-like dominance of the forehead, and he has found how to support it by increasing immensely the bulging salience of the eyes and, with slight variations, the prominence of the nose; and against these he has played the straight line of the base of the nose and the terrible horizontal prominence of mouth and teeth . . . But what an astonishing grasp of plastic form the head reveals. The sculptor has somehow got behind the facts of appearance. He understands the language of plastic expression so completely that he can create a living human being without any regard to the facts of any existing or even possible human head.' (p. 77)

but he has a tendency to place the two aspects of a work side by side, as he does in this on a Maya head:

> 'I do not know whether even in the greatest sculpture of Europe one could find anything exactly like this in its equilibrium between system and sensibility, in its power at once to suggest all the complexity of nature and to keep every form within a common unifying principle, *i.e.*, each form taking up and modifying the same theme. The oval is of extraordinary beauty in its subtle variations upon the main idea—you will note how a too exact symmetry is avoided partly by bringing the lock of hair on one side further over the cheek than on the other. There is also, I think, undoubted vitality, a powerful suggestion of the inner life—of a strange tension of spirit—of an almost tragic cast.' (p. 87).

One could quote endless sensitive descriptions of pictures, statues and vases—though some would, of course, be more com-

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pletely satisfying than others—and also many felicitous generalizations which draw pages of these together to sum up the essential character of an age or a civilization ; one example of these last must suffice:

> ' If we compare this sinuous and flaccid curve with the controlled energy expressed by the rounded rectangular system of curvature of early Chinese art we get the essential difference between the spiritual attitudes of the two peoples. We shall see other examples that will make this clearer. But what this figure shows also is the extraordinary capacity of these Indian artists to seize and express the most complicated plastic systems. They have perfect freedom of plastic direction. You remember with what hesitating and tentative steps Egyptian and Sumerian sculptors liberated themselves from the flat frontal approaches to the plastic structure of the human figure . . . but this artist who belongs, remember, to the beginning of truly Indian art, can twist his torso at any angle, can relate his limbs to the trunk in any possible pose. In short, his imagination evolves directly and freely in three-dimensional space, whereas the Western artist can only achieve this freedom step by step and as it were by deduction from a series of two-dimensional elevations. This is a very remarkable gift and is one of the chief characteristics of Indian art.' (p. 152).

Taken as units, the lectures on Egyptian, Negro and Chinese art, with its brilliant aside on Scythian, seem particularly impressive both for range and insight, though only specialists could check the former quality. In discussing Greek art, where he looks upon the quest for a perfect human type as an intellectual interference with the artist's natural sensibility, Fry refuses to cultivate one epoch more than others and assess each work separately on its own merits, doing more justice than has long been done to the Winged Victory and other fourth century works. I do not feel that Maillol should be used as a standard in sculpture as often as Fry uses him. But the chief interest of the book lies in the particular analyses, and here, though some are obviously hasty lecture notes, I think that it is clear that, with his emphasis on the quality of vitality, Fry was moving towards a more satisfactory account of the nature of representation in art than one finds usually in his previous work.

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One sees his admiration for an easily graspable rhythmic unity in both painting and sculpture, but he no longer asserts that representation subserves purely plastic ends ; he comes very near to asserting the opposite. Actually the greater part of his particular criticism, even if we leave out of account the very early work, tends to treat a work of art as ' an endeavour to express an idea rather than to create a pleasing object.' (*Vision and Design*, p. 302).

Fry does not demand vitality as an essential quality of the highest art—one could hardly expect him to—but some of the descriptions in the *Lectures* would have gone a long way to meet Lawrence's caustic gibes at the prophets of Significant Form. Lawrence's *Preface to these Paintings* is written round a theory, which leads him into at least one amazing absurdity, and obviously, despite his wide experience, art criticism was a side-line to him, but nevertheless his criterion, that of the amount of solid living life in a picture, seems to me a valid one. Once again he draws attention to essentials which have been forgotten in the developmnt of critical refinements. After all, the Renaissance Italians did portray life and plenty of it, whereas even Cézanne, as Lawrence points out, painted apples more successfully than people.

It seems to me that the ideal art critic needs both Lawrence's eye for fundamentals and Fry's sensitiveness to the details of technique ; not that Lawrence was insensitive to technique, as he shows in his comments on Cézanne, and, elsewhere, on the Italians, when he relates together the formal aspects of pictures and their subjects very convincingly. Fry is sometimes so concerned with design that he does not merely treat the subject as a thing apart, as one expects, but belittles it altogether. I am thinking of the occasions, for example in his comparison of two pictures of the Marriage of St. Catherine by Fra Bartolomeo in *Transformations* and in an article on Rembrandt's *Bathsheba* in *The Listener* about the time of his death, when he appears to treat the subject of a picture as something which is adequately described by the title ; I say ' appears,' because in his analysis of plastic elements he constantly refers to the forms as human beings and so brings in wider implications of representation at another point. It is also unfortunate that he describes the representational element in pictures as the psychological element in several places. I think that human figures in art can often have great emotional

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significance, without being portrayed with much psychological subtlety. Fry compares Brueghel's *Crucifixion* and Poussin's *Ulysses finding Achilles* in this connection. Despite Brueghel's mass of detail and the elaborately individualized faces of his chief characters I don't think he really presents us with a great pictorial 'criticism of life.' Nor does Poussin, but he does communicate certain grave and dignified feelings about a group of human beings, which are ordered by the formal pattern. The idea of vitality developed for the first time in the lectures is altogether more satisfactory. Fry finds it both in the almost abstract Negro spirit head and in the angry-looking Chinese bear ; he complains of the lack of it, along with plastic deficiencies as well, in most Greek statues. Again and again Fry describes a statue or a picture as communicating a mood or emotion, and each time by the vitality contained in a plastically satisfying object. The key-word, whether explicit as in the description of the bear, or merely implied, is 'transmutation.' Significant Form should mean natural objects or human beings transmuted into stone or on to canvas, with the stylization, personal or traditional, involved in that process, so that they have an intense symbolic, or perhaps better say metaphorical, significance.[1] The ideal, if one must have one, should not be a perfectly 'pure,' but a perfectly 'impure,' work of art. I don't think it an *a priori* argument to say that it follows that a flower vase cannot have tragic significance ; Fry, when he talks about 'the barbaric ruggedness of its jagged projections' in describing a Chou yu, avoids any exaggeration of this kind, though the temptation is obvious. It is also worth mentioning that his admiration for the quality of sensibility never leads him to praise the 'arty and crafty' in the applied arts or 'chinoiserie' of any time or place. It seems to me inevitable that one should have to admit that certain pictures in the Grand Style, such as Raphael's *Transfiguration*, though possessing superbly varied plastic harmonies, are inferior works of art—literary parallels with elaborate prosodic patterns might be cited ; Raphael went on to decorate the Sala della Segnatura. We still belong to a Christian tradition and

[1]Fry's own best analyses tend towards, if they don't always quite reach, this point of view. It is, of course, Lawrence's. Perhaps there is something in Pater on the *Mona Lisa* after all.

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therefore could easily appreciate the feeling of the *Transfiguration* as at least a possible aspect of experience, if there were really any there—we can accept El Greco's ecstatic visions. A real problem arises in the case of Negro, Maya and even sometimes Chinese art, where contact is much more difficult with anything but the most general human significance expressed. I think we can only recognize it as a problem and console ourselves with a thought of the *Waste Land* and the eclecticism of our civilization. Fry's ostrich behaviour and talk of the universal language of form really makes the problem more acute.

It remains to thank Sir Kenneth Clark and his anonymous assistant for making the *Lectures* and their illustrations permanently available. Sir Kenneth Clark introduces the book with an excellent critical survey of Fry's artistic outlook.

GEOFFREY WALTON.

HOLLYWOODEN HERO

THE FIFTH COLUMN, by Ernest Hemingway (*Cape, 10/6*).

The ox, as a literary hero, is no longer *à la mode*, and Mr. Hemingway himself has grown a little dusty. He has never again dazzled the literary skyline with another such rocket as *A Farewell to Arms*, and it would indeed be difficult to imagine a pyrotechnic display more cunningly engineered to elicit the goggle-eyed oohs and ahs of a wider diversity of ill-assorted spectators. The high-brows ahed knowingly because the book had, or seemed to have, an Original Technique ; the low-brows oohed excitedly because it was outspoken, a rattling war-cum-sex yarn, yet tragic too. And now the rocket has collapsed in ashes, nor has a re-issue in the Penguin Library done more than feebly re-animate the relics with a tawdry glow. Yet if it was overpraised as a work of art, and if Mr. Hemingway's growing reputation as Professional Clown and Tough Guy to the Great American Public has rather obscured his qualities as a writer,[1] it does not follow that he has none, or that they are uninteresting. *A Farewell to Arms* still seems to me a accomplished book, for whether it is valuable and whether it is

[1]We in England find it difficult to understand or even to realize the nature of the peculiar mythology which America erects around its tame artists-cum-entertainers. In this connection a remarkable

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false are two distinct questions which are often treated as though they were one.

In saying that it is accomplished I mean that it is competent with the slickness of the tougher type of Hollywood film. It is often said that Hollywood emotion is essentially synthetic but this, though true, is not the whole truth. It is wrong to assume that glycerine tears, because they are often inadequately motivated and always unsubtle, because they lack sensibility and hence any of the real passion that cannot exist apart from sensibility, have therefore no motivation at all ; it is wrong to put all the blame on Hollywood for tapping the glycerine vats in people's hearts and none on people for possessing those vats waiting to be tapped at ; and we must remember too that though there is much that is deliberately vicious in glycerine tears yet a form of art or entertainment so popular and universal cannot exist without incarnating, even if fortuitously, some of the values which the people who patronize it honestly live by.

Of course, to the intelligent and sensitive—to the Cultured Minority—toughness seems merely the most complacent form of stupidity, the reverse of being ' grown up,' rather an emotional immaturity, an inability to handle situations and experiences except by denying their validity. Yet it is only the complexity and difficulty of emotional experience that toughness denies, not emotion itself, for at heart toughness battens on virtues extravagantly soft, extravagantly sad and rather foolish. One believes in the simplest kind of sexual love and in intoxication ; one takes an exhibitionist delight in manifestations of mechanic skill, whether in driving a car or slaughtering an animal ; one holds steadfastly by courage (in the face of bulls, lions, guns, gangsters, women scorned and people who do not play the game), by sacrifice, and by a primitive kind of honour. It is true that one must not mention honour or courage or sacrifice by their names:

> ' I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious and sacrifice, and the expression in vain. We had heard them sometimes standing in the rain almost out of earshot, so that

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document recently published with much munificence under the title of *The George Gershwin Memorial Volume* deserves the closest scrutiny.

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only the shouted words came through, and had read them, on proclamations that were slapped up by billposters over other proclamations, now for a long time and I had seen nothing sacred and the things that were glorious had no glory and the sacrifices were like the stockyards at Chicago if nothing was done with the meat except to bury it . . . There were many words that you could not stand to hear and finally only the names of places had dignity ; '

but to admit fear of them is to admit belief in their existence, and it is the essence of the code that one must not whine, must accept what life offers fatalistically (' So this is what it's going to be like. Well, this is what it's going to be like, then ' . . . ' No pleasure in anything if you mouth it up too much.'). How simple and how extravagantly emotional the values of toughness really are is revealed not only in the love story of *A Farewell to Arms* but also in such quasi-satirical stories about the warping of natural desire as *Mr. and Mrs. Elliot, A Canary for One* and *A Very Short Story* ; while it is stated explicitly in a passage from the first chapter of the book about bull-fighting:

' So far about morals, I know only one, that what is moral is what you feel good after and what is immoral is what you feel bad after and judged by these moral standards, which I do not defend, the bull-fight is very moral to me because I feel very fine while it is going on and have a feeling of life and death and mortality and immortality, and after it is over I feel very sad but very fine.'

Now you can consider this as amoral as you like, yet it is idiotic to say that for millions of people—though I do not mean specifically about bulls—it is, any more than the glycerine values of the cinema, false. Rather is it terrifyingly true, as true as the banal simplicity of Mr. Hemingway's prose. The infantile repetitions of dialogue in the story *Hills like White Elephants*, with its pathetic-bathetic ' I feel fine ' conclusion, indicates how it is precisely the banality of the greater part of human experience, especially when it seems most intense, that Mr. Hemingway renders with such sinister acumen. And in this passage from *A Farewell to Arms*:

' If people bring so much courage to this world, the world has to kill them to break them, so of course it kills them. The

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> world breaks everyone and afterward many are strong in the broken places. But those that will not break it kills. It kills the very good and the very gentle and the very brave impartially. If you are none of these you can be sure that it will kill you too but there will be no special hurry '—

even the sly, the dexterous tug at the heart-strings in the rhythm of the penultimate clause is honest in the sense that it is true, for we are none of us quite honest in our emotions, quite free from a self-pity that warps, staging them with a theatrical and appealing gesture. Hollywood and Mr. Hemingway's stories both genuinely represent an epoch in the history of human feeling—the situation in the last scene of Mr. Hemingway's play *The Fifth Column* is itself one of Hollywood's ripest chestnuts except that of course Mr. Hemingway does not tack on the usually quite fortuitous happy ending ; but there is this great difference between Hollywood and Mr. Hemingway, namely that whereas these values exist in the cinema only among much that is flabby, amorphous, infantile and adulterated, Mr. Hemingway presents them with the neatness, the concentration of a true if limited artist. This is really all people mean when they talk about Mr. Hemingway's gift for understatement. Every true artist has a ' gift for understatement ' and if Mr. Hemingway's statement seems peculiarly under, that is merely because he has such a very simple statement to start from. It is at least a sort of tribute if we can say of Mr. Hemingway that, for the social historian, he makes Hollywood unnecessary.[1]

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[1]Mr. Hemingway's own account of the ' understatement ' of his art is given in a well-known passage from *Death in the Afternoon*:

> ' If a writer of prose knows enough about what he is writing about he may omit things that he knows and the reader, if the writer is writing truly enough, will have a feeling of those things as strongly as though the writer had stated them. The dignity of movement of an ice-berg is due to only one-eighth of it being above water. A writer who omits things because he does not know them only makes hollow places in his writing. A writer who appreciates the seriousness of writing so little that he is anxious to make people see that he is formally educated, cultured or well-bred is merely a popinjay.'

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I have already indicated that the Hemingway values, as applied to human behaviour, are in the main negative—one does *not* whine, one does *not* give in, one does *not* betray one's trust: and that in so far as they are positive they depend almost entirely on sensation—on delight in food and drink and women, in high speed and mechanic skill, in clean leaves and cool sheets, in tactile impressions and the sharp precision of landscape, particularly landscapes that are sunlit and frosty and sharply defined. (Mr. Hemingway's ' reporter's eye ' as an aspect of descriptive technique, of which I shall have more to say later, is here relevant). The reason for this is that the Hemingway values are not the sort of values on which human relationships could be based or by which a community could live for long. In this respect it is significant that the background to Mr. Hemingway's stories is almost always one of war and sudden death, not because he has any delight in, let alone understanding of, the simple violent realities of life and death in themselves—the amiably grim journalistic irony of *A Natural History of the Dead* shows no concern for the problem of death or the passion and suffering entailed in it—but merely because his values are such that they can live only in the midst of destruction, being the values of a disintegrating society: in other words they are a means of avoiding the complexity of human relations, of avoiding the necessity of living. I think there is probably—behind the grosser superficies, the more obvious symptoms of disintegration—a similar significance in the extreme simplicity of the values of the cinema ; I am quite certain that it is the essence of the characteristic Hemingway situation.

This situation is stated patently in many of the stories about soldiers—for instance *Soldiers' Home*:

> ' Vaguely he wanted a girl but he did not want to have to work to get her. He did not want to get into the intrigue and politics . . . he did not want any consequences ever again. He wanted to live along without consequences . . . he would not go through all the talking . . . he had tried so to keep his life from being complicated.'

Other values may perhaps be hinted at, values more satisfying and even superior, as in the stories about the Swiss or references to the Catholic tradition in the portrait of the priest in *A Farewell*

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to Arms, but it is always suggested that however sympathetic they are naïve, unreal, helpless in a disintegrating world. Should Mr. Hemingway ever indicate any conception of a better or happier life it is merely an intensification of the 'good' things in the present one, the things that make you Feel Fine: it is conceived, that is, like the account of bull-fighting which I have quoted earlier, entirely, entirely in terms of sensation. One of Mr. Hemingway's most perfect and most touching stories, *A Clean Well-lighted Place*, emphasizes this point. The 'very old man walking unsteadily but with dignity,' the outcast cosmopolitan ('last week he tried to commit suicide. Why? He was in despair. What about? Nothing. How do you know it was nothing? He has plenty of money'); the waiter who would return to his wife; the other waiter who has only his insomnia to return to; these are all the stock Hemingway counters.

> '"We are two of different kinds," the old waiter said . . . "It is not only a question of youth and confidence, although these things are very beautiful. Each night I am reluctant to close up because there may be someone who needs the café."
>
> "Hombre, there are bodegas open all night long."
>
> "You do not understand. This is a clean and pleasant café."
>
> "It is well lighted. The light is very good, and also, now, there are the shadows of the leaves . . . It is the light of course but it is necessary that the place be clean and pleasant. You do not want music. Certainly you do not want music. Nor can you stand before a bar with dignity although that is all that is provided for these hours. What did he fear? It was not fear or dread. It was a nothing that he knew too well. It was all a nothing and a man was a nothing too. It was only that and light was all it needed and a certain cleanness and order."'

You see it is no accident that so many of Mr. Hemingway's stories, if they do not take place in wars, have their setting in hotels, bars, or the waiting rooms of railway stations. The inhabitants of the Hemingway world are all homeless, and though they have neither confidence nor youth of spirit they believe, sentimentally but with melancholy honesty, that these qualities are 'very beautiful.' They wish above all to accept their homelessness and

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disillusion ' with dignity ' and a stiff upper lip, and to able to do so they ask little more than an average allowance of sensory and material comfort and cleanness and order. Nearly all the best stories in this volume deal with resignation in face of the biffs life gives one or—and perhaps the two are hardly separable—in face of the failure of an excessively simple scale of values. The quiet conclusion of *A Clean Well-lighted Place* (' "After all," he said to himself, " it is probably only insomnia. Many must have it ' ") is typical, as is the behaviour of the major (of the story *In Another Country*) whose young wife has suddenly died:

> ' He stood there, biting his lower lip. " It is very difficult," he said, " I cannot resign myself."
>
> ' He looked straight past me and out through the window. Then he began to cry. " I am utterly unable to resign myself," he said, and choked. And then crying, his head up looking at nothing, carrying himself straight and soldierly, with tears on both his cheeks and biting his lips, he walked past the machines and out the door.
>
> ' The major did not come back to the hospital for three days. When he came back, there were large framed photographs around the wall, of all sorts of wounds before and after they had been cured by the machines. In front of the machine the major used were three photographs of hands like his that were completely restored. I do not know where the doctor got them. I always understood we were the first to use the machines. The photographs did not make much difference to the major because he only looked out of the window.'

These things are typical and so is the peculiarly drab prose in which this resignation is incarnated. This is Mr. Hemingway's contribution to literature and if too topical and local to be permanent I think it is none the less a real one.

In trying to understand the means whereby Mr. Hemingway effects this incarnation we have first to consider his ' reporter's eye.' ' I was trying to write then,' he says in *Death in the Afternoon*, ' and I found the greatest difficulty aside from knowing truly what you really felt, rather than what you were supposed to feel, and had been taught to feel, was to put down what really happened in action: what the actual things were that produced the

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emotion you experienced. In writing for a newspaper you told what happened and, with one trick and another you communicated the emotion aided by the element of timeliness which gives a certain emotion to any account of something that has happened on that day: but the real thing, the sequence of motion and fact which made the emotion and which would be as valid in a year or in ten years or, with luck and if you stated it purely enough, always, was beyond me, and I was working very hard to get it.' Here I think we can see the fundamentals of Mr. Hemingway's method, and also we can see how different they are from those of William Faulkner, a writer with whom he is often considered comparable. Faulkner tries to give a scrupulously realistic account of commonplace or even subnormal experience, but throughout so artificially intensifies the experience that it becomes a dishonest perversion. It is not merely that life is *not* like that, that the casual circumstance is not pregnant with such violent electrical cross-currents, but the dishonesty takes the form of an attempt to pump tragic significance into a conception of life that is quite as banal as Hemingway's, and much more confused. Thus not only is its experimental technique (mainly a matter of interspersing straightforward statements with unnecessary clauses) factitious, but also its imaginative conception is chaotic—it is written from all points of view and none. Mr. Hemingway has his own brisk answer to this kind of Literature:

> 'No matter how good a phrase or a simile a writer may have if he puts it in where it is not absolutely necessary and irreplaceable he is spoiling his work for egotism. Prose is architecture, not interior decoration, and the Baroque is over . . .
>
> 'This too to remember. If a man writes clearly enough anyone can see if he fakes. If he mystifies to avoid a straight statement, which is very different from breaking so-called rules of syntax or grammar to make an effect which can be obtained in no other way, the writer takes a longer time to be known as a fake and other writers who are afflicted by the same necessity will praise him in their own defence. True mysticism should not be confused with incompetence in writing which seeks to mystify where there is no mystery but is really only the necessity to fake to cover lack of knowledge or the inability to state clearly.

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Mysticism implies a mystery and there are many mysteries ; but incompetence is not one of them ; nor is overwritten journalism made literature by the injection of a false epic quality. Remember this too: all bad writers are in love with the epic.'

I think it is a good answer if a simple one, and in its bluff way it really is consistent with Mr. Hemingway's practice. For though his reporter's eye may not see very much it sees what it does see very clearly—clearly enough to make his ' realism ' not realistic but merely an acceptable literary convention. It is easy to see in such a passage as this:

' We were in the garden at Mons. Young Buckley came in with his patrol from across the river. The first German I saw climbed up over the garden wall. We waited till he got one leg over and then we potted him. He had so much equipment on and looked awfully surprised and fell down into the garden. Then three more came over farther down the wall. We shot them. They all came just like that,'

or in such tiny tales as *On the Quai at Smyrna* and *The Revolutionist* how Mr. Hemingway uses the description of facts and incidents in the simplest language and most banal rhythms as a personal convention reconcilable with the characteristic Hemingway virtues of resignation, fatalism, and fortitude in the face of physical and occasionally mental suffering ; while in *Old Man at the Bridge* we see the process carried a step further—a piece of reporting transformed, by *selection* of detail and control of rhythm, into a Hemingway situation, into a kind of minor art. I think it is clear from this story that Hemingway's prose, however colloquial, is no more realistic than, and as conventional as, that of (say) Meredith. This, for instance, may be based on the movement of speech:

' There was nothing to do about him. It was Easter Sunday and the Fascists were advancing towards the Ebro. It was a grey overcast day with a low ceiling so that their planes were not up. That and the fact that cats know how to look after themselves was the only good luck that old man would ever have:'

but essentially it is speech stylized for a specific end. So too, and much more obviously, is the private language, always consistent

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with the Hemingway virtues, which is spoken by Mr. Hemingway's heroines, where the extreme limitation of the stylization is the condition of the intention being clearly realized. (' You'll kill him marvellously,' she said, ' I know you will. I'm awfully anxious to see it.'). Even when Mr. Hemingway dabbles in the Steinian trick as he does occasionally in order to express states of drunkenness coition or hysteria, he does so strictly within the limits of his own convention, and not in a flatulent gallimaufry of everyone else's conventions that is supposed, as in Faulkner, to be realistic. You may think it awfully boring to be all the time making love and awfully brave and maybe awfully drunk, yet it's an awfully big thing and it's no use shutting your eyes to it.

> ' I was trying to learn to write, commencing with the simplest things, and one of the simplest things of all and the most fundamental is violent death . . . I had read many books in which, when the author tried to convey it, he only produced a blur, and I decided that this was because either the author had never seen it clearly or, at the moment of it, he had physically or mentally shut his eyes, as one might do if he saw a child he could not possibly reach or aid about to be struck by a train.'

It is Mr. Hemingway's achievement that, in a fashion rather different from his intention, he really has presented us with the picture of a kind of death, and that he has done so without ' blur.' The death which is the Hemingway mentality is closer to us to-day than it has ever been, and it is stated in his art with the greatest possible neatness and condensation. We can take it or leave it ; but we run the risk of being blurred ourselves if we try to be grateful to him and sad about him at one and the same time.

W. H. MELLERS.

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